Interview with Ms. Helen Weinland

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

HELEN WEINLAND

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: February 2, 2009

Q: Let's start at the beginning; when and where were you born?

WEINLAND: I was born in Manhattan on July 28th, 1941. My family at that time lived just over the border in Westchester County, in Yonkers. I actually grew up in Chappaqua, New York, where Bill and Hilary Clinton now hang their hats.

Q: Let's start on your father's side; where did they come from, what do you know about that family on that side?

WEINLAND: My father was Richard Douglas Weinland. He was born in 1910 in Springfield, Ohio. His father was an engineer and had graduated from Ohio State. My father grew up in Springfield and went to Miami University of Ohio. After he graduated, (I think he majored in chemistry), he went to work for the Continental Can Company, which no longer exists but was a major American packaging company. He went to their operation in Cincinnati, where he met and married my mother. As soon as they married, they moved to New York City and he worked for the rest of his life with Continental Can Company in New York City — for the rest of his working life, I should say.

For a good part of that time my father was in the international division of Continental Can Company which had a whole number of licenses for some of their patented systems with overseas companies: in France, in Germany, in Great Britain. (I guess the German connection was after the war.) One of the interesting things he did after the war was over was to travel with the chairman of the company, a man named Mr. Conway. They took a nine week trip both to Europe and then to various parts of Africa, the North African French colonies and South Africa where the European companies had subsidiaries. So they took a long trip to renew and renegotiate all those licensing and cooperation agreements.

Growing up in that setting was really very interesting because from a very early time I can remember foreign visitors in our home. They would come out for Sunday dinner or something if they were visiting New York. As a young child, I recall struggling to understand foreign accents, talking to the people about their children, where their kids went to school and sometimes starting little pen pal relationships and so on. So I was very early on exposed to an international life in that way.

Q: Let's move to your mother's side. What do you know about her side of the family?

WEINLAND: I actually know more about my mother's side. My mother grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, where her father was a lawyer, had been a district attorney. She went to Vassar College and graduated with a major in mathematics, and then went to work for Proctor and Gamble, which was, of course, a major company in Cincinnati. She lived at home. She met my father when he was working at Continental Can. She did not work outside the home for quite a long time after we children were born. Eventually she went back first to work as an assistant in the local library in our town and then, at about the age of 60, turned herself into an extremely good nature photographer. Some of her photographs are in Audubon guides and things like that. She is still living. My father died almost 17 years ago.

Q: Let's talk about growing up; did you spend most of your time growing up where? We are talking about up through high school.

WEINLAND: We lived in Chappaqua, New York, and I went to elementary and junior high school and the first year of high school in the Chappaqua public schools. Then the last three years of my high school life, I went to boarding school in Wellesley, Massachusetts, at the Dana Hall School.

Q: Let's talk about Chappaqua. What was Chappaqua like growing up as a kid?

WEINLAND: It was a very small village in those days. It's now got a Starbucks and all those standard establishments, but in those days it was a very simple place. The parkway that came from New York ended right there, so we were safely able to cross over into the village from where we lived and go shopping at the five and ten and all the other small merchants in town. It was an entirely white town, there were no minorities living there that I am aware of, certainly no kids in the schools that I went to. When I was fairly young, it even had restrictive covenants to prevent Jewish people buying homes in certain parts of the town. That was not the case where we lived but it was the case in a number of housing developments. So looking back on it, of course, I realize that we grew up in this bubble of white privilege and exclusivity.

Q: Looking at the religious end, where did your family fit?

WEINLAND: My mother and my father were both Protestants; my mother, Presbyterian, my dad, Methodist. For a while they went to the Congregational Church in Chappaqua that was the largest Protestant church in town. There was also a Catholic church. There was a fairly sizable Catholic population and also there was a small temple that has now gotten bigger. And there was an Episcopal church. My parents stopped going to church when I was about eight or nine.

I then began to go to the Episcopal Church in the next town over, Mount Kisco, with my next door neighbor who was like a grandfather to us. I was confirmed an Episcopalian and grew up my final formative years in that church. I am still an observant, practicing Episcopalian.

Q: What about your family in the political field? Where did they fall?

WEINLAND: Well, they came from Ohio. When Hubert Humphrey was defeated in 1968, I called home and said, “Ohhh, the world is over,” my mother said to me, “That's what my father said when Franklin Roosevelt was elected in 1932.” They fit very comfortably into what was then a very moderate, New York State Republicanism. As the Republican Party of that era began to be marginalized, they drifted and ultimately registered as Democrats, so they both finished their lives as Democrats.

Q: Republicans like Senator Javits, were very solid liberal center of republicanism.

WEINLAND: I would say my parents were very — well, my mother is still — tolerant people and so anything that smacked of exclusion (of course, we lived in an exclusive neighborhood, obviously) but anything that smacked of prejudice and disliking people for their political or religious or other views was not acceptable — you didn't hear that in our house.

Q: It was a period when, as you say, there were restrictive covenants, trying to keep Jews out. There was an anti-Semitism that was pervasive. Did you feel that at all?

WEINLAND: There was some of it even in my house, not in the sense of disliking. I mean, my father had personal relationships and working relationships and many of our neighbors were Jewish, but there was this sort of, “Well, of course, so-and-so is a Jew and so he's got this kind of sense of humor,” sort of thing. Certainly, I heard it at the bus stop when a

couple of the kids would start teasing another kid who was Jewish. So, yes, that was in the town, certainly.

Q: Also, probably, it may have been changing but in many of these communities there was not necessarily anti-Catholic feeling but there was division between Protestants and Catholics.

WEINLAND: It was very strong.

Q: You know, Protestant boys aren't supposed to date Catholic girls and vice versa and that sort of thing. Was that around?

WEINLAND: Upper Westchester County, where Chappaqua is, has a large number of people of Italian descent and that was true in Chappaqua. These were people whose ancestors very often had come to the United States as stonemasons in order to build a lot of the dams and highways and bridges and things, beautiful stone bridges, in that part of the country, and so many of them settled all through northern Westchester. There were quite a large number of families, relatively speaking, in our town and in our school. We mixed, at least in elementary school, we mixed easily. I don't know, I didn't finish high school there, so I don't know what the dating situation was.

Q: How about school? How did you find school?

WEINLAND: Chappaqua was known as having a very fine school system. I feel I got a very good grounding. I enjoyed it for the most part until I got into high school and I began to dislike the kind of teasing I got because I was a very good student and so that made me very unhappy. Socially, I wasn't one of the cheerleader, popular girls. So that was one reason I was happy to be able to go away to school.

Q: How about coming up, when you were learning to read, were you much of a reader?

WEINLAND: Oh, yes. I have a brother who is two years older and when he was learning to read in first grade, he taught me so I was able to read even before I went to kindergarten. There was no preschool in those days. From very early on, I always had my nose in a book.

Q: Do you recall any in earlier years, any types of books that particularly interested you?

WEINLAND: Well, I liked things like Nancy Drew and those sorts of books. One of the things I do remember was my grandparents had built a camp on a lakefront in Ontario in Canada where we went several summers before my grandmother died. There was a series that was on the bookshelves up there called The Little Maid From and then it would be Bennington, Vermont or New York or wherever, all set in the period of the American Revolution. It was a gentle way of teaching American history for girls of eight or ten years old and so I read all the way through that series. By the time I was twelve or thirteen, I was reading things like Jane Eyre and other Victorian classics.

Q: What sort of sports did you all play? Were girls given good exercise or not?

WEINLAND: No. I mean, my parents tried to get me interested in tennis, which I didn't like playing because I didn't like getting sweaty. We went swimming in the summer. I went to summer camp. I did like horseback riding and so for two or three years, late elementary, early junior high, I used to go horseback riding every week. I enjoyed that.

Q: At that time there wasn't much in the way of girls' soccer or anything?

WEINLAND: No. I can even remember when I was taking these horseback riding lessons going to school one day dressed for it, because we were going directly from school, and being chastised by one of the teachers, I think it was a seventh grade teacher, so we must have been in seventh grade, for wearing pants to school instead of a dress. We never,

ever wore jeans or overalls to school. It was always a dress or a skirt. That just by itself restricts what you are going to do.

Q: What led to your going to Dana Hall?

WEINLAND: My brother had gone away to school. I don't know quite what led into that decision.

Q: Where did he go?

WEINLAND: He went to Exeter Academy. So it was sort of, do you want to do this? As I said, I was getting tired of being teased for good grades and all, so I said I did and we went around visiting several different schools and that was the one I chose.

Q: You were at Dana Hall from when to when?

WEINLAND: The fall of 1956 until June of 1959. I graduated in 1959.

Q: What was Dana Hall like when you got there?

WEINLAND: I think there were about 100 people in our graduating class and in those days they only had three grades in the full Dana Hall. They had junior schools and so on but only three grades in the high school so I started with the class. It was, I would think about half boarding and half local girls who lived at home. It had a headmistress who was a very ferocious woman but also extremely insistent on high educational standards. Their aim was to get girls into the seven sisters.

Q: The seven sisters being?

WEINLAND: Mt. Holyoke, Smith, Radcliffe, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Barnard and Wellesley.

Q: Did you find this a school where there was a conformity of social matters and all that? How did you find it?

WEINLAND: Well, yes. They had a lot of rules and things like contacts with the opposite sex were very strictly supervised and so on. We weren't allowed to get into automobiles in town or anything of that kind. We did have a certain amount of freedom; we were allowed to go into Boston on the train for an afternoon on Saturdays. And we had dances but again, they were very strictly supervised. You know, we were being raised to be young ladies, wives and mothers.

Q: What sort of courses did you particularly like there?

WEINLAND: I loved the history and that in fact is what I ended up majoring in when I got to college. I had a very good American history teacher my first year there with whom I am still close friends. I took a lot of language. I had started Latin in high school back in Chappaqua and I started French and had a wonderful teacher in French who was very vibrant, a lovely French lady. I graduated with four credits in Latin and four in French because I accelerated in French and got one credit over a summer.

We also had very good instruction in English literature. I was never particularly interested in science and math although we had, again, very good teachers. I think our instructors across the board were almost all very good. I enjoyed the chemistry I took and the math but I never felt I was bent in that direction.

Q: How about the world outside while you were at Dana Hall and also at Chappaqua? Did this intrude much or not?

WEINLAND: There are certain things I can remember reading in the newspapers when I was quite young, some of which were more sensational than others, like the Rosenberg

trial. They were held at Sing Sing prison, which was right near Chappaqua so I was sort of ghoulishly fascinated.

Q: The so-called commie spies.

WEINLAND: Yes. In my second year at Dana Hall was when the Russians put up Sputnik, 1957. I can remember all of us herding out on the lawn in front of the main building one night to look up in the sky to see if we could see it going over. So that was something that we were all aware of.

Of course, I can remember when I was quite young, all the atomic bomb drills in schools where you had to get down under the desk and all that kind of thing.

Another thing I do remember was that our eighth grade social studies teacher was, I think, under some cloud with the school board because they thought perhaps she was not as loyal as she was supposed to be. It was very much a time when people were worried about whether you were loyal to the United States. The Army-McCarthy hearings were going on and I think she was teaching a unit about that and that brought her to the attention of the authorities. (It's entirely possible I am interpreting this incorrectly, as my brother cannot remember this.)

I also remember, again in my first year at Dana Hall in the fall both the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian Revolution.

Q: This was in the fall of '56.

WEINLAND: Yes, that would have been my first year at Dana Hall and they occurred just about the same time, so if you were living through it, it appeared as though this was the beginning of the conflagration that we were all very nervous and agitated about.

I am trying to think if there were other things right during that time. A lot of it was more when I was in college. Our senior year I was ordered to take a course called “Problems

of Democracy" and one of the things we had to do was read the "Week in Review" in The New York Times. That would be the basis of discussion in class and so in that sense, we were aware of politics.

Q: Did you find yourself reading about foreign countries and all of this or was it still more American oriented?

WEINLAND: I think it was American oriented. I think any world history I took was in ninth grade in Chappaqua and I don't particularly remember anything about that. I was always a British history buff. I was fascinated with the royal family, so I was always reading up about that, but I can't remember being interested in Russia or any of the hot spots in the world.

I took my first trip to Europe summer of 1958. My parents were going to Great Britain, and they took me with them. We went to London and then we drove around much of the countryside in the south, went to Wales where part of my mother's family had come from —and I was fascinated with all the castles and stately homes.

Q: As you were getting through with Dana Hall, in your own mind, what were you pointed towards?

WEINLAND: You know, I don't really know we were pointed toward anything in the sense of thinking about careers. I think very much the assumption was that we would go to a college for four years and then we would marry and have a one income, nuclear family. Even in college there wasn't much emphasis on preparing for any kind of professional life.

Q: I graduated from Williams in 1950 and I really didn't have any idea what the hell I was going to do. It was sort of get married and get a job, nothing in particular.

WEINLAND: Yes. In our senior year at Dana Hall everything was pointed toward what college you would get into and we were all being counseled. In those days you didn't have

to do this applying to twenty different places. I applied early admission and was accepted by December and that was the end of that. So I was pointed toward that.

Q: Did Dana Hall sort of pump its girls into any particular schools?

WEINLAND: Smith.

Q: Smith?

WEINLAND: Yes, I think about 15 of our class went to Smith.

Q: Did you go to Smith?

WEINLAND: No, I did not. I said I wasn't even going to look at it because I didn't want to go where everyone else did.

Q: So where did you go?

WEINLAND: I went to Mount Holyoke, right down the road from Smith.

Q: That's not that far away. You went to Mount Holyoke from when to when?

WEINLAND: I started in the fall of 1959 and I graduated in 1963.

Q: Talk about Mount Holyoke. What was it like when you went there?

WEINLAND: Mount Holyoke is in a very rural part of Massachusetts, although in an area which at that time had an increasingly depressed industrial sector in the textile industry. It has a very beautiful campus with a couple of lakes and so on. It is not as beautiful as Wellesley but it is a very lovely campus. At the time I went there, it was very much like Dana Hall, although a lot of girls came from public schools, it was almost entirely white with a few foreign students of color. I think gradually during the time I was there, there may

have been a few more African American students but not anything like a number that you would have been aware of.

It was a college probably like most of the single sex women's colleges of the time. Many of the professors were women who came out of the early women's liberation movement, so many of them were single women of late middle age who had earned PhDs in the twenties and early thirties. I think as a group they were very disappointed in us because of our willingness, seemingly, to yield back all the gains that their generation had secured. Some of the younger faculty were male and fairly recent PhDs and I would say, just as I would about Dana Hall, that the level of teaching was very high. All our classes were taught by professors and people on the tenure track. They were no graduate students to speak of there and so we were taught by the full faculty members.

The president of the college was a man named Richard Gettell, who had succeeded another man who had been much beloved. I don't think any of us ever felt very warm toward President Gettell. I think he had been brought in to shore up the finances of the college. In those days when I first applied to Mount Holyoke College, it cost $1800 a year, room, board and tuition, which gives you some idea. Of course, my dad was not making anything like what a high middle management person would make now.

Q: But proportionately, that's still not the burden that it became later on. I was almost a generation earlier at Williams.

WEINLAND: My brother went to Williams. My parents had two children in college, and I don't recall there was any great sacrifice in the home during the time.

Q: Something has happened to the system. How did you find the student body? Was this a congenial group or what were they interested in?

WEINLAND: It is so hard to remember, it seems so long ago. One of the funny things is that I am still quite close to a number of the friends I made, even in the first year I was

at Mount Holyoke, and so it is hard for me to separate my memory of them 45 years ago from my memory of them now. I think we all came from schools that were very highly competitive intellectually or academically, whether they were private or public schools. If they were from public schools, they were usually from the really fine, white suburban schools around the country.

Q: Where they were kicking their kids into the top schools too.

WEINLAND: I guess what I should do is break here and talk about single sex education as opposed to coed education because I feel that was a very important part of my growing up. The wonderful thing about a women's boarding school or women's high school and also a women's college (and Mount Holyoke has remained a single sex school) was that all the leaders on campus were women. When there was discussion in class, it was led by women because we were the only gender in the classroom. That developed in us, I am convinced, a sense of self-assurance, of trusting our own intellectual development, of not worrying — and in those days women were still expected to defer to men — and therefore we didn't have to worry about that as long as we were on campus. I mean, obviously in the dating scene, you then began to fall in the more acceptable norms but in the classroom, on the hockey field or whatever you were doing, you didn't have to take into consideration whether you looked messy or sweaty, whether you were looking too competitive or anything like that. For me, that was a very important element in my growing up. A lot of women, even coming out of Dana Hall, were not looking for that. They may have gone to state schools or Stanford or top coed schools, but for me, going to a women's college seemed a good choice and I still think it was a good choice for me.

Q: It remains that way too, I think. I think the difference in social dynamics where women don't have to, deference is no longer a word used in schools about one sex or the other.

What sort of subjects particularly interested you while you were there?

WEINLAND: Well, I carried over my interest in history and I majored in history and I carried over my interest in English and I had a very strong minor in English. Those were sort of the two things I took all the way through. They had a set of requirements for your first couple of years so you had to take a lab science and a social science and a language and so on, so I took chemistry, I took math, and I reached my ceiling in math my freshman year. I didn't do badly but I said to myself, “I know I can't go on in this subject without some grief.” At some point I took another French course to fulfill that requirement and then I guess in my sophomore year I took economics and political science, both of which I found interesting. The political science course I took during the year of the 1960 election so that was sort of fun.

Q: This is a very important election and I wonder, did this engage you and your fellow students?

WEINLAND: Oh, yes. I didn't work in the campaign, or I don't recall working in the campaign but we certainly watched all the debates on TV. There was a lot of intense discussion around it. At the end of my freshman year and therefore the end of the Eisenhower administration, was the time when we had the Gary Powers U-2 shoot-down over Russia, so all this spying suddenly became part of the morning news.

There was to have been a summit that was cancelled and I do remember there was a lot of nervousness over that. During the presidential debates, there was all the argument over Quemoy and Matsu and the sense that maybe the Chinese were beginning to raise their heads. This was yet another danger in the world and one that concerned a lot of us so we were — I wouldn't say that we were intensely political but we were certainly aware of it.

In those days the voting age was 21 so relatively few of us at Mount Holyoke were going to be able to vote and I was not able to vote in that election. I was only 19 or 20.

Q: What was the dating pattern there?

WEINLAND: Well, of course, some people had already come in with boyfriends from high schools who were somewhere in the neighborhood and some of those relationships went on. Others of us depended on friends to set us up with blind dates.

The drinking age was 21 in Massachusetts; it was 18 in New York but it was 21 in Massachusetts so whenever you went out on a date locally, you know, say with someone from Amherst or Williams, I dated someone from Williams freshman year, we would go around and find an engaged senior who wasn't going out that evening and borrow her driver's license so that we could drink, so I would not say that we were not drinking. We had parietal rules so on weekdays we had to be home in the dorm by 10 and on weekends we were allowed if we signed out, to stay out until 1 in the morning, which I found somewhat painful. Sometimes if I was out on a blind date and found him intensely boring, he knew you could stay out until 1, and you couldn't say at 10:30, “Gee, I think I'll go study for my economics exam” and “It's been a nice evening.” No men were allowed into the dorm above the first floor. We had what were called dating parlors, so if your date came into the dorm, you had special rooms on the first floor where you could go. God help you if you were caught with someone above the first floor, God help you if by any chance you got pregnant — which occasionally girls did and then they were asked to leave college.

Q: As you reached senior year were you still looking toward the “M.R.S. Degree” or were you opening your sights?

WEINLAND: As we say in German, “Jein” (Yes and no). First of all, I went away my junior year so I was in Edinburgh, Scotland, that year. I came back to senior year, and I was doing an honors degree, so I really spent senior year in the library. I had been dating somebody, but that broke up. Therefore, I just concentrated, just narrowed my focus down, so as you say, the question was what was I looking toward as I finished. I would say we got virtually no guidance. There were a few companies that would come recruiting on the

campus but not very many. I had had a summer job, and they had liked me, but they were not able to say come join our. . .

Q: What kind of a job was it?

WEINLAND: It was like a dogsbody in Allied Chemical, Inter-Chemical Corporation, I forget which one it was. I was working for a few men in the inks division who needed copying done. This was back in the days when machinery and technology weren't very good and tabulating certain kinds of things or copying long papers were tedious. Essentially, I did office support work. The personnel department said I could come if I wanted to, maybe I could help produce the in-house newsletter, but there was no sense that I could ever be in an executive training program or anything of that kind. Because I was a very good student, my teachers essentially were just saying well, of course, you will go on to graduate school and I simply accepted that as what I would be doing. So by late fall of 1962 I was taking the GREs and applying to graduate schools.

Q: How did you find being in Edinburgh for a year?

WEINLAND: That was a really interesting year in a lot of ways. I had never lived on my own in any kind of city. It wasn't a very big city but it was certainly more urban than anywhere else I had lived. I started off rooming in a boarding house with a couple of people and then halfway through the year with a couple of other people moved into an apartment, so it was the first time I had ever lived on my own. I was a long way from home. In those days, you did not make transatlantic phone calls unless somebody in the family died or something. The only communication with the parents was writing. I was independent in a way that I wasn't at Mount Holyoke; getting registered for classes and figuring out how to maneuver around the bureaucracy of a totally different kind of university was quite interesting. I did a lot of growing up that year. I learned how to be on my own and solve my own problems.

Q: Did you get any feel for British society or Scottish society at all?

WEINLAND: Not really. I can't say I got to know many British students. They were not particularly looking for friendships with American students. My history tutor, who was English, not Scottish, as well as his wife, invited me and others in his tutorial to their home for Sunday dinner. That was a pleasant break, and has led to a continuing friendship with them.

One time we were invited to spend Sunday with a woman and her father who lived down south of Edinburgh toward the border with England. Another Holyoke student and I were introduced by a friend of a friend. We got on the train and went down there and were picked up in her Land Rover and driven to what turned out to be a castle, a little castle, very small castle, and then her father came into the room and we stuck our hands out and almost said, “We are happy to meet you, Mr. Johnson (or whatever the family name was)” and she said, “My father, Lord Stratheden”. Then you sit there and you think, well, how do you address this person? So that was an interesting dilemma for an American, a couple of American girls. But generally speaking I would say I spent a lot of my time walking around the city and hanging out more with American kids than with Scottish kids.

Q: Well, then you graduated in '63?

WEINLAND: In '63.

Q: And then what?

WEINLAND: And then I went to graduate school.

Q: Where?

WEINLAND: I went to Indiana University.

Q: Bloomington.

WEINLAND: In Bloomington, Indiana. I had applied to a few places and shocked my professors at Mount Holyoke because I chose to go to Indiana, where I wanted to work half time rather than go to a place where I would have had a full fellowship. So I was working as an editorial assistant on Victorian Studies, a periodical that was published there. A couple of the editors were people who were supervising my academic work as well. I had gone to get a PhD in British history.

Q: Did you do that for the three years?

WEINLAND: I did that for two years, and subsequently had a teaching assistantship. The trouble was I probably should not have gone to graduate school, but there was no way to discover this given how people were guided in those days. They didn't say, well, you know business, government, and academia. I would have probably done better to go into some kind of business training program or into some kind of government program than into a situation where I was essentially working on my own after the course work was over. I found it very difficult to be a self starter that way.

Q: Were you at all attracted by, when Kennedy came in the "Ask not what your country can do for you, what you can do for your country" and all? Were you at all attracted to government service?

WEINLAND: Not at that time, no. The people who majored in political science at Mount Holyoke fell into two camps; one was the international relations camp that Ruth Lawson taught and the other was the domestic government side that was taught by a woman named Vickie Schuck. She had connections all over Washington, and all the women under her wing came down to Washington and did internships during the summer, but I never, I was not in those courses so I didn't get steered in that way. A lot of women who did have had successful government careers, even from the time I was there.

Q: How long did it take you to get your PhD?

WEINLAND: I didn't finish the PhD.

Q: And you were working half time.

WEINLAND: Yes, I was working half time, first at Victorian Studies and then subsequently as a teaching assistant.

Q: What was your dissertation on?

WEINLAND: Had it been finished it would have been on — and this is one reason why it wasn't finished — it was much too airy-fairy. I took two British historians whose lives were about 80 years apart, one born in the early 19th century and one toward the late century, who both wrote about the same period, the Elizabethan, early Jacobean period of British history, and then both had public lives. What I tried to do was to say the lessons they learned from the history they wrote and the way they wrote it helped to direct their public lives; the contrast between the two kinds of public lives they followed, I posited, tells you something about how there had been a shift in Victorian thinking over that period. It was a far too complicated project to undertake at that level, I think now, but I had a dissertation adviser who was always thinking in these ways and so he didn't say to me cut it down and get it done and then do the bigger project 20 years down the line.

Q: How did you find the Indiana University? Was it a different atmosphere from Holyoke?

WEINLAND: Oh, yes. It was a state university, to start with, although not a particularly big one, and it had had a very dynamic chancellor who had retired a couple of years before I got there who had really built it up academically. It had a very good faculty, I would say. As a graduate student I was able to get to know the faculty fairly well. I am still in touch with a couple of the people I studied with there. It was an interesting university, although I wasn't

in this group in the history department. It was an interesting history department because it had a lot of students — first of all, it had a very good language school there —

Q: It is renowned for its language.

WEINLAND: All the eastern European languages, everything, old High German, all kinds of obscure languages like that. A lot of graduate students in history were first and second generation immigrants from a lot of those countries. As is true with a lot of first and second generation, the parents had been told, only English, forget the old country, all that, and the children were now discovering their roots, so there were a lot of kids who were doing Polish history or Russian history or whatever and so there were a lot of area studies programs. A lot of students in the history department were in those kinds of studies programs so it was a very interesting group of people earning their degrees there.

The university also had a fabulous music school and you could see world renowned people, who were on the faculty, and free chamber music or piano recitals or whatever. They performed an opera every Saturday night so you'd go to the opera. It was a very exciting place to be, I thought.

Q: Did the world intrude on you very much or were you pretty much in Victorian England or actually, Elizabethan England?

WEINLAND: I would say that's the place where — two or three of the editors I worked with at Victorian Studies, the professors who editing the journal, were themselves very active politically and quite left wing — so I would say it was the time in my life when I really became convinced that there was a responsibility on the part of the citizen to be part of a community. I would say I shifted quite noticeably to the left in my political thinking. Probably during my Foreign Service experience, I moved back somewhat towards the center.

Q: Well, not Leninism but Marxism per se was really alive and well in the American academic world at the time. Did that attract you?

WEINLAND: No. I don't think the people I was hearing all this from and talking about all this with were particularly Marxist but more democratic socialist, not as ideological as Marxism.

Q: Well, what happened? OK, so you are here slogging away and something happened.

WEINLAND: To do what?

Q: Yes, to do what?

WEINLAND: Well, after I had finished all my courses and was close to having finished a dissertation, I got a job at Ohio State University where I went. I was there for three years teaching history. They had still at that time a program of teaching the introductory courses of history with instructors in small classes, so I would have usually three classes a quarter of about 35 students each, so I got to know their names and there was a lot of class discussion and so on. The university obviously couldn't afford to keep on doing that.

But then I was getting to the end of the three-year contract and it was becoming clear that I was not going to finish the dissertation. Somebody said to me, “You should take the Foreign Service exam” and I could see I was not going to be able to stay in academia; even community colleges were requiring the PhD. British history as a sub-subject was drying up and with all those factors I just thought, better join the Foreign Service or at least take the exam, which I did. I don't know what it is like now but it was a very tortuous process. It took about 15 months from start to finish.

Q: I assume you passed the written?

WEINLAND: I passed the written, not well on the math side but quite well on the other parts and then I came for the oral.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions at all or how the oral went for you?

WEINLAND: It was right during the Watergate hearings, in the spring of 1973. They had just opened that investigation, the Ervin committee was just getting geared up.

Q: So when was this?

WEINLAND: It was the spring of '73. I had driven from Columbus, Ohio, where I was living. I moved out of my apartment, got in the car and started driving east. I threw a rod in the car and destroyed the engine so I sat in a motel for three or four days while is was being repaired. It was ghastly. I got to the oral interview in a mood of “well, whatever.” I just hadn't focused at all on this. The first question the man asked me as we walked down the hall was if I had had any trouble getting there, at which point I shrieked with laughter.

They asked me and I am trying to think how it came up. I know they asked me certain things about American interests, vis-a-vis, Europe and whether it was in our interests that the European Union be strong or not, and that kind of thing. I said yes, and then it was a little difficult for me to think why I said yes, but anyway. Then somehow something came up that had to do with the Watergate break-in and the political climate. I said something to the effect of, “Well, clearly a number of the people who are behind this are absolutely crazy. You know, they are nuts.” One of the examiners looked at me and said, “Well, do you know any of them? “ And I said, “No, I don't know any of them but of course, you can tell. They are nuts.” And then I paused and I looked at him and I said, “Do you know any of them?” He said, “Well, I have met G. Gordon Liddy.” I think he had been in the embassy in Mexico when Liddy was doing something down there. So I said, “Is he nuts?” He said, “Well, he's a little unusual.” So that is another question I remember.

I can't remember any more of the interview.

Q: Well, then there was a security clearance and all that. So when did you come into the Foreign Service?

WEINLAND: Between that oral exam and getting in, I still was looking for a job and it was a very tough time. It was during that '73 economic downturn and there were hiring freezes all over Washington, but I did finally find a job. About January, the next year, '74, I had a phone call from somebody putting together an entering class and he said, “We would like you to enter in March, '74.” I had houseguests at the time of the call, and they had a cranky little kid. We were putting dinner on the table and I got this call after six months. I said, “Oh. How much time do I have before I have to give you an answer?” which was not what he was accustomed to hearing from people, and he answered, “Well, I guess you could take about a week.” So I said, “OK, I'll be back to you within a week.” I took down his name and number and I spent some days calling around to people I knew who had been in the Foreign Service or who knew people who had been in the Foreign Service, asking is this a good way to go, and they said, “Yeah.” Then I went into my boss of that time and I said, “Is this any kind of career track job I am in now?' and he said, “No.” I said, “I have worked for you for about six months, but I am going to have to take the State Department job because this offers me a career which you can't.” He was agreeable and I found a replacement for me and they were very happy with each other.

In March of '74 is when I joined.

Q: You took the A-100 course, didn't you? What was it like, sort of in terms of composition? How did the people strike you and all?

WEINLAND: I was surprised to find that a lot of them had been just passionately wanting to get into the Foreign Service, from college on. I was by this time 32 so a number of them were younger than I was and most of us were State. There were at least one or two people

in the foreign agriculture service and maybe one or two in the commercial service. At least one woman was a spouse of a Foreign Service officer so she had come in from Tehran, where he was posted. It was a good group. I mean, I enjoyed getting to know them. I have always felt that one of the wonderful things about working for the Foreign Service is that your colleagues are almost always universally bright, interesting, hard working, dedicated public servants. I think that almost everybody I met in that class fell into that category.

Q: I have been doing these oral histories for over 20 years and I certainly wouldn't be doing it with successful insurance agents or brokers or what have you. Interesting people but also interesting places.

Did you have any idea what you wanted to do or were they telling you what kind of job you would be taking at that time?

WEINLAND: At that time when you took the exam you declared a “cone” and I had declared consular. I had read through the various descriptions and thought that that one fit me the best, so I figured I was headed for a consular job. I think our class was probably more consular and political with fewer economic and admin officers. There must have been a couple of people from USIA (United States Information Agency) at the time. I knew that consular service meant visas, passports, citizenship and all those kinds of things.

While we were in the A-100 class we were then also talking with our CDOs (career development officers) about where we wanted to go. When I entered the Foreign Service I just figured I'd spend my career in Europe. I knew German, I knew French, had studied British history, so I went in and he said, “List three parts of the world in the order you would like to serve in.” I think I put down first Europe, second Asia and third I can't remember if it was Latin America, maybe. That was sort of how I envisioned my career. It did not work out that way.

Q: So we are talking about '74 and you had taken a two month, three month course?

WEINLAND: Five weeks.

Q: And whither?

WEINLAND: And then I took two weeks of consular training. Then my first assignment, I had a kind of funny, well, had an interesting experience. I went in for the second meeting with the CDO and he said, “Well, nothing is open in Europe. You have the choice of three constituent post consulates in East Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia: Udorn, Thailand,” where of course at that point during the Vietnam War, we still had an enormous air base; “Medan, Indonesia, and Cebu in the Philippines.” I knew a couple of people who had been in Indonesia out in the Far East and so I asked them, “Which one of these would be the best bet?” and they said, “Oh, no question. Medan.” So I told my CDO, “OK, what I want is Medan.”

I went to panel and was refused. I was told later by somebody who had been on the panel, or he actually told somebody who told me, that the reason was that I was female and it was a predominately Moslem area and they did not want a woman, even as a vice consul in Medan. Of course this was highly ironic because about ten years later, Harriet Isom was the consul general. So there I was, and then they said, “You can't go to any of those three,” (you know. I didn't even have the choice of going to Cebu). “You are going to go to Manila and be a consular officer in Manila. That job won't open up for a year so in the meantime, you are going to go to the Philippines desk.”

I said, “I do not want to go as a consular officer to Manila. I am happy to go to the desk, but I will spend the next year trying to change my assignment.” So I went to the Philippines desk, which was a fabulous experience for a new officer. We were in the middle of three big negotiations. I was working mostly for the man who was the economic officer on the desk. We had a big trade negotiation, “Laurel Langley” it was called, that was coming up for renegotiation. We had an air agreement that was coming up for renegotiation. The Political/Military people on the desk were preparing for a big negotiation over our military

bases in the PhilippineClark Air Force Base and Subic Bay for the Navy. Both bases were important in our military presence in the Pacific Command. So it was a very interesting time. I trotted around all these different high level meetings between all the different agencies. It gave me a wonderful view of how State worked with Commerce, Agriculture, Civil Aviation Board and all these different agencies and how they got into terrible turf fights in the middle of these things, where Agriculture and Commerce would be going at each other.

Then one night when I was going home from work, maybe three months down the road, I got into the bus and there was my CDO sitting next to me and I said, “Oh, hey. Have you placed the next class?” and he said, “We even had some places left over.” I said, “Like where?” One of them was Zurich and I said, “I'll take that one, that would be nice.” So I changed my assignment from Manila to Zurich, and so my first overseas post was at the Consulate General in Zurich, Switzerland.

Q: So you were in Zurich from when to when?

WEINLAND: I arrived in December of 1974 and I was there until December of '76.

Q: What was the post in Zurich like at that time?

WEINLAND: There were five officers and one support staff, a communicator, and a bunch of Foreign Service Nationals. I was the junior of two consular officers. There was a commercial officer; there was a political officer and a principal officer. My immediate boss, the senior of the two consular officers made it clear he had had enough visa work in his life to last him until he retired. I did the visas and by the time I left, I was doing 20,000 visas a year.

Q: These were mostly non-immigrant visas?

WEINLAND: I only processed one immigrant visa, because they were generally done in Bern. The one immigrant visa was actually a very interesting case but all the rest were non-immigrant and mostly visitor visas.

Q: Let's talk about the atmosphere in Zurich at the time. How did you find it?

WEINLAND: I always say Switzerland is a wonderful country to visit and a country I would never, ever be able to live in. I know this is not everybody's idea but the Swiss, I don't know if they have changed but they were very self-satisfied, quite well off. They had a lot of temporary workers from Italy and Yugoslavia whom they did not treat very well. The city was extremely clean, very peaceful and pretty dull. I did do a lot of hiking in the mountains while I was there, both with a Swiss friend and with various American friends who came to visit. It was very beautiful, and a wonderful way to clear the head after issuing visas all week long.

Q: There's a movie, I think called Bread and Chocolate, which shows the life of a woman, of guest workers there, Italian guest workers.

WEINLAND: And it was pretty much on the money. There is another wonderful movie that I don't think was ever distributed in this country called Die Schweizermacher, which had to do with immigration and becoming a Swiss citizen. That was pretty much on the money too. They are not very open to granting Swiss citizenship to people.

Q: How did you find the sort of community with your consul general?

WEINLAND: I would say I was the only person in the consulate who was able to get along with all the others. You know, I was so junior, I didn't have a lot of turf issues. I don't think the principal officer liked my immediate boss very much and I don't think my immediate boss had huge amounts of respect for him. I liked them both.

Q: Who was the principal officer?

WEINLAND: It was a guy named Jim Nelson, a nice man with a wife who didn't take herself too seriously. My immediate boss was a man named Jim Huffman whom I am still in contact with. There was some chemistry between them that just didn't work too well.

The commercial officer had a number of personal problems that I won't go into here but that was a really tough thing for all of us to have to deal with.

The political officer was very sophisticated, a lot of fun, also with a wonderful wife. I can remember they took me out to dinner the night I was in the middle of packing out and I said to her, “This must get easier after you have done it a couple of times.” And she looked at me with this look, “You must be out of your mind.”

Q: Tell me about the immigrant case.

WEINLAND: The immigrant case was Alexander Solzhenitsyn. He had been thrown out of Russia and had been granted refuge by the Swiss. He was living in Zurich with his wife and I think they had three children, one of them hers by an earlier marriage, and the mother-in-law. So there was a big family group. He had already gotten a non-immigrant visa to go to the States to do some lecturing.

The first time I issued a visa to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, he wanted a non-immigrant visitors' visa to come to the States for some lecture or research, so it was just he who was applying. He had come in to see the consul general and when I was called up to the consul general's office, to meet him, the consul general handed me the passport and then I shook Mr. Solzhenitsyn's hand and then the Consul General said, “Mr. Solzhenitsyn wants to travel to the States” to do this and that and the other and I said, “Oh, OK.” I opened the passport and the first thing I see is the notation “212(A)28.”

Q: Which is . . .?

WEINLAND: Ineligibility because of a communist affiliation, this person whom the communists had a year or two earlier thrown out of the Soviet Union. So of course, rather awkwardly, I said to him, “Mr. Solzhenitsyn, I see that there is this notation and I am going to have to ask you about why this says you have this affiliation or used to in the past.”

So we had to do an interview. He spoke fairly good English or German, maybe we did it in German, and it turned out that as a youth he had been a member of Komsomol, which was nearly obligatory for youth in the Soviet Union. So I said, “There's no question that your attitude toward the communist regime in the Soviet Union is one of opposition, so I can't see any problem getting you a waiver” and that's indeed what we did; we got a waiver of ineligibility.

But then of course, he came in for the immigration visa. He wanted to keep it very hush-hush because I think he did not want the Swiss officials to know that he was planning to emigrate to the United States. He was obviously very paranoid about the KGB keeping track of him as well.

So we did all the interviewing in my office. I had to get a waiver for his mother-in-law because she had been a member of the Communist Party. So he came in with her. She spoke only Russian, so he was translating to me in German. The kids were too young to have to worry about. Then the wife also, I can't remember if she had a communist affiliation or not but for immigration visas of course, there was a great deal that had to go into documenting their opposition to the communists and all that.

I do remember during the interview with the mother-in-law, I said to her, “Can you tell me anything about your opposition to the Communist Party and how you left it?” Solzhenitsyn then said to me, “Well, it's obvious. She was by then my mother-in-law and she was reading all of my books.” She wrote something that supported some of his books or something like that. I was trying to be cute, and I said to her, “Well, if his books were banned in the Soviet Union, how is it that you were able to read them?” This was

very foolish on my part because you didn't joke about things like that with Alexander Solzhenitsyn. “Well, of course, she read them in samizdat (self-publication), and I said, “Oh, OK, fine.”

Q: Samizdat was the process of underground publication in the Soviet Union.

WEINLAND: Yes. So ultimately, we got all the right waivers and all the right documentation. We had to recreate all their personal documents like birth certificates and marriage certificates and divorce certificates. They had not been able to bring those papers out of the Soviet Union so we had to create an affidavit for each one, all sorts of papers with red tape all over them and seals and everything else. Then the final visa was actually issued by the visa officer from Bern and the Foreign Service National who did immigrant visas there. They came up to Zurich and actually did the fingerprinting and the technical part of issuing the visa. So it was sort of exciting to be part of that.

Q: Did you get any feel for the international community in Zurich? Was it sort of spy versus spy?

WEINLAND: That was not in my portfolio. It was, however, the time of the Bader-Meinhof Gang and the Rote Brigade in Italy, these terrorist groups.

Q: The Red Brigade, these are homegrown, leftist terrorists, not particularly affiliated with anybody except themselves.

WEINLAND: Yes, but doing horrible things; murdering and kidnapping and the rest of it. I think there was a certain, not at my level, but a certain amount of keeping track of who was moving back and forth across Switzerland and also the money flow. I think that money flow was something that was very much of concern.

We had three visits in all from Kissinger in Zurich. I think I am right in saying the first one was with the Shah of Iran and I am trying to think in the context of '74 to '76 what they

would have been conferring about. It would have been prior to the Shah's having any serious domestic opposition but it could have been to do with petroleum issues or money laundering, stuff like that.

The second and third Kissinger visits were for him to meet with the South African foreign minister and others to try to resolve the situation in Zimbabwe, what was then Rhodesia. The meeting with the Shah of Iran was just a lunch with no overnight stay, but the other two meetings were a couple of nights each. Those were pretty intense. He came with a really big group of people. I am sure they got some way down the road toward resolving some of the issues and getting the South Africans to get their dirty hands off supporting the Smith regime.

Q: Well, you left there in '76?

WEINLAND: Right.

Q: Whither?

WEINLAND: Back to the State Department to the Op Center where I was a watch officer and did all the things watch officers do: sitting at the desk, calling all over the world, briefing principals in the Department on breaking issues.

Q: You did this '76 to '77?

WEINLAND: Well, I would have started right at the beginning of '77 and it was for a year.

Q: Do you recall any of the issues? I realize as watch officer you only get a piece of the action each time. Did anything sort of break at your time?

WEINLAND: There was a coup in Pakistan. I think that was the coup in which they later hung Bhutto.

Q: Well, Bhutto was taken and later tried and hung.

WEINLAND: Yes. That sticks in my mind because one of the other watch officers had just come home from a posting in Pakistan. I was on the desk as she came on duty. She was reading in and coming up to speed, and I was still the watch officer, and the phone rang and it was a man with a very strong Pakistani accent who said, “Please, can you tell me what is happening in Pakistan?” I said, “Oh, wait just a minute” and I put him on hold. I said to Karen, “There's a Pakistani who wants to talk about Pakistan” so she got on the phone and started briefing him in Urdu on what we knew. I thought to myself, he must think we have a bank of people just sitting around waiting to brief in Japanese, or Swahili or whatever. So that was sort of fun.

I think there must have been a couple of hostage things because it was the heyday of the airplane hijackings and I think there was a train that was hijacked in Holland or someplace.

Q: Those were Indonesian insurgents. . .

WEINLAND: On the political front there was one of those periodic crises in the Congo, where somebody invaded. I don't think there was anything huge on the Cold War front, but I can't remember. Of course, we only got into things that broke during the night. Once it was daytime, you would just call the regional bureau and say come up and get all these cables.

Q: Did you have any feeling at the time that being a watch officer in that area that it was sort of a select crew?

WEINLAND: Yes.

Q: Who was the head of it at the time?

WEINLAND: A man named Perry Smith, a nice guy. We were encouraged along with SS/S, which was the staff support for the secretary and the other principals, to think of ourselves as sort of the top staff people whose job it was to make sure the principals had all the information they needed so, although we did liaise with all the regional and functional bureaus, our closest constituents were the top staff people for the under secretary for political affairs, the deputy secretary, the secretary for economic affairs and so on. I think we felt that we were in a very privileged spot because we knew everything that was going on. We read even fairly highly classified stuff.

Q: It is considered also a step towards the inner circle.

WEINLAND: Yes.

Q: Where did you go after your year there?

WEINLAND: By that point I had decided I did not want to stay in the consular cone, which I still was in. I asked my CDO to find me a political job and so she looked around and said there was a political job open on the Nigeria desk. I said that would be fine. I moved downstairs to AF (Bureau of African Affairs).

There were three officers at that time handling Nigeria because it was a very big and important country for U.S. interests, and so there was a senior officer and two of us more junior. I handled the political and consular issues and the other one handled the economic and commercial stuff. The director of AF/W was a man named Tom Smith, who subsequently was an ambassador to Nigeria and then died tragically early from cancer. He was an aloof man, a Boston Brahmin type, but very balanced and fair and didn't get excited and was not a screamer.

My immediate boss, the top of the three, was a man named Peter Chaveas, who has just retired, who had already been in Nigeria, had served a tour at the consulate in Kaduna, and had also been in the Peace Corps and had had a posting in Sierra Leone so he was

very knowledgeable about West Africa. Subsequently, he served twice as ambassador, in Malawi and then Sierra Leone. My sideways colleague was a man named Robert Kott and I don't know what happened with him.

Q: You were there, what would it have been, '77 to '79?

WEINLAND: I started in January of '78 and it should have been a two-year tour but what happened was that I went out to Nigeria on my familiarization tour and I absolutely fell in love with the place, which I had not expected to do. I came back and said there was going to be a political job opening up in the summer of '79 that I would like to be allowed to curtail and bid on. Tom Smith gave me a little grief on that because he was then going to have to find another desk officer sooner than he thought. I was eventually allowed to do that.

Q: During the time, this would be?

WEINLAND: '78 to mid '79

Q: What was the situation in Nigeria?

WEINLAND: They had a military government under the leadership of General Olusegun Obasanjo. He had announced at the time he took over that he would turn over the government to a civilian government. I was on the desk during a very intense period of preparation for the shift to civilian rule that was due to happen in August of 1979. The Nigerians, of course, had to allow political activity to begin: parties to form, allowing more freedom of the press.

We were also intensely involved in discussions with the Nigerians about economic issues. They had become one of our more important suppliers of petroleum, and they were sitting pretty. At that time amazingly, there were something like 20,000 Nigerians in the United States studying, who were, most of them, on some kind of government scholarship. One

of my jobs was to be sure that the Nigerian government was coughing up the necessary funds to keep them enrolled in all these universities all around the country. That was sometimes a delicate job.

There was a great deal of interest in Nigeria from the American business community because, of course, they saw that there was an opportunity to invest there and, many thought, make a killing. We had a great deal of back and forth activity on that score.

We did not have a USAID (United States Agency for International Development) program at the time because there was a prohibition on USAID being involved in a petroleum exporting country. We had a sort of quasi-USAID operation that got started, which essentially was helping the Nigerians themselves invest some of their money, somehow.

Q: Given Nigerian proclivity for getting involved in various schemes that are not necessarily honest, with 20,000 students in the country, they must have caused problems, didn't they?

WEINLAND: Not really. I think that reputation is from a somewhat later period. There was a lot of money in Nigeria; certainly Nigeria did not have an honest government. I don't know that they ever have since the time the military assassinated the first prime minister, but by and large, it was nothing like what it became later. Certainly we didn't have all the scams and drug crimes that became so prolific in the 80s and 90s.

Q: You say you went to Nigeria on a sort of familiarization tour. What hit you about Nigeria?

WEINLAND: It was in those days and I think still is a country of immense energy. The people there are wonderfully outgoing, creative, intelligent. I mean, I just loved the sense of energy and purpose and hard work. It just struck me. I had never been to Africa before. I was really lucky; the trip must have been two or three weeks and I went all over the place.

I went to the east. I went with the petroleum officer to the east and we visited some of the offshore platforms and stuff like that. I had never been on an oil platform before.

The petroleum officer was sort of a madman. He was always interested in all the culture, so we'd be driving along, and he'd all of a sudden say, “Oh, there's this wonderful weaving something or other here. Oh, this is a town that's very famous for pottery.” We were always stopping and going in. He knew chief so-and-so who had come into the embassy one day and whom he had gotten to know, so let's go see him. So we went in and had kola nut with Chief Mbah. We went to Enugu, then the capital of the eastern region, and we stopped in Bendel, and then we went to Ibadan, which was the site of the oldest university in and one of the leading universities in Nigeria.

Then I went up north and traveled with the Consul General in Kaduna all the way out to Sokoto, where the Sultan of Sokoto, the nominal chief of all the Muslims in Nigeria, has his palace, and then on up to Kano, a premier commercial center in the north. So I really saw a very large amount of the country, which is large and quite varied in people, landscape, and economic life. There was something about it that just appealed to me.

Q: Were the issues of the Biafran War pretty well submerged by the time you got there?

WEINLAND: Officially, but even today they are not submerged in the memory of the Ibo. Has our Civil War been put to rest yet? And ours was a hundred years before the Nigerians'. Civil war is a terrible thing.

One of the things I found interesting was that in the east, the central Ibo land in particular is in a belt of very dense forest. It's very heavily populated but you really wouldn't know that, just driving down the road. But you look down side tracks and side roads, and all of a sudden you see that there is some settlement back there. If you go back in there, you will find there are 10,000 people living there. In almost every one of those places I would suspect, even in those days before all the wealth had really been built up, there would be what they call a “story house.” You know, most people would be living in fairly simple one-

story cement buildings, but then somebody who was making his money in Lagos would put his real investment into a very nice, fancy house in one of these off the road villages.

My feeling was that they were all trying to ensure that they had a bolt hole, if they needed one. I think that is still true today — they make their money in Lagos, but build their permanent homes in the villages. The villages are very important anyway to a Nigerian. That is where he is from and that's where his parents and grandparents are buried, that's where he wants to be buried, that's where the ancestral spirits live. That's a very significant tie, and they were putting their money in those places as well.

Q: At the time you were on the desk, was there the concern that at one time the oil money was being squandered? I recall there were huge delays at the port. You had ships lined up bringing cement and other materials, just sitting there. Was this a problem?

WEINLAND: Yes. The port wasn't too big and by the time I arrived out there for my two-year tour, it had even gotten more severe. There were occasions when pirates would board the ships waiting in the outer harbor or out in the bay and take over the ship. I remember one case of a Dutch ship that was taken over by pirates and the captain was radioing from his quarters and they couldn't figure out quite what to do. Somehow the situation was resolved, but it was not unlike what is going on off the coast of Somalia today.

Q: When you got there, who was the ambassador?

WEINLAND: It had just changed. Don Easum had just left and Steve Low was coming in. Easum may have been there for another couple of weeks after I got there. I would have arrived in late July or early August and then Low would have arrived a few weeks after that.

Q: And the DCM?

WEINLAND: The DCM when I first got there was Parker Wyman. He was there for a year and was replaced by Wes Kriebel. Low was there for the whole time I was there.

Q: You were part of the political section?

WEINLAND: Yes.

Q: What piece of the action did you have?

WEINLAND: The civilian government had just been elected and seated, perhaps a week before I arrived, so my beat was the legislature, and regionally, the east. Those were the two big things on my plate.

It was a very interesting time to be there because their prior civilian government had been modeled on the British system, so the seating in the parliament was two opposing benches across from each other. And there was all this sort of parliamentary procedure. But the new constitution they had written, they had done a lot of consulting with us on how this, that, and the other worked, and it was based pretty much on the American system.

They had five political parties at that time, two of which were pretty big while the other three were more regional in their support. So the legislators were just beginning to get to Lagos to take up their jobs. One of the things I had to learn, when you live in a place like Nigeria, is that nothing works: the phones don't work, the traffic and roads are a mess. Nowadays, everybody has cell phones, but in those days there were only land lines and they did not work. Usually when a political officer changes over, you leave a list of your primary contacts and so on, but of course nobody had any primary contacts with these people, by and large. I mean, people in the embassy knew some of the big muckety-mucks, but not the ordinary heads of party caucuses and other key figures. They had been given living quarters (in Nigeria whenever you work for the government, you are given housing), that were a long way out of town. So I would drive out there in an official car with a driver and bump my way through all these traffic jams and over these rutted roads

and everything. Then I would just walk up and down corridors of the apartment complex — I mean, there was no list of where any of these people lived. You would just knock on the door. “Hi, I am from the American Embassy,” you know, and “who are you and do you know where I can find Mr. So and So? Mrs. So and So told me this” and blah, blah, blah. without any of the technology that I had grown up with.

It was an extraordinary introduction to how to do seat of the pants political work.

But then the legislators themselves began to get somewhat irritated by the fact that they were half an hour or more away from the legislative building. The apartments were so small they couldn't even have their wives, let alone their families plus servants, come and live with them. So they started scouting around and they found a wonderful, new apartment complex right down the road from where the embassy was on Victoria Island, the newest area of Lagos that was growing up. So they said, “Well, we'll take those.” And the civil service said, “No, those were built for mid-level civil service” and the legislators said, “Well, the civil service can go find other housing but we like these. They are big enough for us and we like them and that's for us.”

So they moved in there. I had formed a nice relationship with the man who was the clerk of the National Assembly, the top civil servant at the National Assembly, and among other things he gave me permission to pick up the record of the legislative debates within a day or two so I didn't have to wait for them, possibly, to be delivered in the mail. I had my own little pigeon hole over there. He also gave me a list of what apartments all these people were in. I was able more easily to go over to the apartment complex, usually in the evening, and I would go and look for the heads of committees or caucuses to get to know people.

It was really fun, because many of the legislators didn't know how it was supposed to work, and generally I did. One of the things they all wanted to do was to travel to the United States and speak to counterparts in our both state and national legislatures about how you

run a committee, how a committee reports out to the full house, how the protocol works and so on. We in the political section were working very closely with the people at USIS (United States Information Service), putting together traveling groups to go to the States. I don't know how many of these trips we organized. It really was a lot of fun because you could sort of say, “Well, you're going to meet with the chairman of the agriculture committee” or something like that. The entire transition to the civilian government was taking place before our eyes.

Then there were CODELS (congressional delegations) coming in our direction from the U.S. Congress as well. So they were all very anxious to meet with them.

I really felt I probably knew better how their government should work than they did, although I never said that. I knew a few people over at the British High Commission, and one of them was talking with me one day, and he said, “Well, if this particular issue breaks this way and so on, maybe the government will fall.” I said, “You don't understand. Under the American system, the government does not fall.” That was news to him.

Q: Did you find the people were coming back with pretty good ideas on how to run things? Did you see a sort of a gelling of the system?

WEINLAND: Yes, I think so. I mean, some of them were more interested in going shopping and their perks when they were in the United States and that wasn't always successful. Like our system, the committee assignments had been made on the basis of regional and party balance and so on, so there were some duds and some really sharp, bright people.

I became a good friend of the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and also some of the other senators. Of course, I was doing the regular representation thing of dinner parties and all that too.

Q: How did you find the dinner party work in this atmosphere?

WEINLAND: Giving a dinner party in Nigeria is a real challenge; even Mrs. Low found it so. In my head I would make up a list of people that I thought, well, it would be interesting to bring these people together; both Americans and other diplomats and Nigerian legislators. I would send out cards and then run into them down at the legislature and say, “I hope you are going to come to dinner next Tuesday.” The usual reply was, “Oh, if I can, I will, if I can. Inshallah (God willing).” So the day would come, and I would have no idea who was going to be at my dinner party, so I would cook, or rather the cook did. I would have planned to have 12 people, so I would cook ample food for 12 people and in one case, nobody turned up, except the couple from USIS whom I had invited. In another case, I opened the door and a guest standing there said, “This is my cousin from my village.” There is somebody there I had never met before in my life, or there might even be two or three people in that category so I would quickly reset the table, put in another leaf, whatever. It's a very interesting challenge.

I was saying to somebody just the other day, I will forgive things for my Nigerian friends that I would never, ever forgive for American friends. I just learned that if I was going to get worried about stuff like that, I was not going to be very happy there.

Q: Were there any issues, were we more interested in seeing the development of a political system than issues, would you say?

WEINLAND: Certainly one of the things at the top of the list was to encourage and help guide the democratization of the country. Petroleum was always a huge issue in our relations. There were various American investment issues there that sometimes would heat up. There was a plan to build a big, new fertilizer plant and we wanted a piece of the action, of course. We were up against some intense French competition. I don't know if you have ever served in Africa but the French don't play very clean in Africa, so that got a little heated.

I am trying to think what other issues there were in those days. The West African countries had a regional organization that has become fairly significant, called ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). That was just beginning to get up off the ground and they were having summits and so on and so forth. In the long run we were quite interested in how that would develop. There was some effort to give some support to that.

The major international issue for the Nigerians at that time was to bring about an end to apartheid in South Africa. Our bilateral relations were always conducted within the overshadowing of that issue. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and the appointment of Chester Crocker as Assistant Secretary for African Affairs the following year, increased the anxiety of the Nigerians over this issue, as they viewed Crocker as too sympathetic to the white South African government.

The political counselor, the DCM, or the ambassador were the ones who would go over to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on U.N. issues and other multilateral or bilateral issues on which we were interested in getting Nigerian support. I concentrated mostly on reporting on Nigerian domestic developments.

South Africa was, as I have said, a huge issue.

Q: How was that playing in Nigeria? South Africa is pretty far away from there.

WEINLAND: Oh, it was very important to them, very important. They, of course, were pushing very strongly for economic boycott and during the time I was in Nigeria, the U.S. position opposed economic sanctions. The Nigerians were upset with the U.S. not being stronger against the apartheid regime. It was a very large issue in all of our conversations that involved international kinds of issues.

Interestingly, we had a good head of the FAS (Foreign Agriculture Service) office in Lagos. One day I was down at the legislature. Whenever I was at the legislature, I was not only getting all the information about party relationships and bills in process and so on, but

I was also receiving constant personal requests such as visas for relatives, information about political processes in the U.S. and so on. One day a senator approached me and said, “I am starting a chicken business and I need to get feed grain” and I said, “Oh, well, I'll put you in touch with the foreign agriculture attach#,” so I went back to the embassy and said, “This important senator from the north wants to start a chicken business and he wants to talk to you about importing grain.” So I think they had a meeting.

A few weeks later I ran into the senator, and I said, “How did your conversations with the attach# go?” and “Were you able to find a source of corn in the States?” He said, “Oh, I found it much cheaper in Mozambique.” So I went back to the agriculture attach# and said, “It seems the senator is going to import his corn from Mozambique” and he said, “Ha, ha, ha. That's South African corn. Mozambicans don't grow any corn for export.”

So the next time I saw the senator, I said, “I understand this corn you are importing comes from South Africa.” “Oh, yeah,” a mere technicality.

Q: Were you keeping an eye on the Nigerian military?

WEINLAND: Oh, yes. We had a big defense attach# office there. I mean, I am just trying to think if I knew anybody very important in the military. The military, the previous military government had all pretty much retired from the military so they were all going into business and using the millions they had salted away to establish themselves as big men around town. I think there was always the worry that there would be a military coup but I don't think it was so much the political section, per se, that was tasked with keeping an eye on that.

Q: What about the element within the legislature, the political process of corruption? How, were you reporting on this or seeing this?

WEINLAND: Oh, yes, we saw it. It's always hard to know how to handle that when it's pervasive but not, I would judge at that point, seriously getting in the way of general

democratic processes as I think it did later. There was a huge amount of wasteful spending. The legislators were all concerned about their perks, a stipend for this and a stipend for that, and travel — they all wanted to travel all the time. There were people in the legislature who had come in from business. The president of the Senate was Joe Wayas. He came from the eastern part of the country and had his fingers in every pie. He was something of a lightweight, except for the fact that he had this position, due entirely to the geographical and political party distribution of legislative titles, but he was entirely concerned with securing his future.

Then there was another man I saw fairly frequently who came from one of the middle belt states Kwara. He was a doctor by training, but had been in a lot of business. I think he was very much involved in the effort to put telephones throughout the country, one of the many efforts to establish a functioning telephone system in Nigeria, and I think he was getting some rake-off from that. So yes, a lot of them were doing business on the side. I don't think there was any serious ethics legislation such as we keep attempting to put in place in our country but they managed. I think that we were aware of it but I don't think we felt it was an impediment to the interests that we were pursuing.

Q: How pervasive was the tribal set up within the country?

WEINLAND: That's always a difficult question to answer. For some people it is the factor that explains everything, but I have never believed this. I think also people from the outside who don't know a great deal about Nigeria don't always understand that, although there are three large tribes, Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa, that there are many, many smaller ones, still with millions of members.

I can remember sitting at a dinner once next to a gentleman and he was speaking with someone across the table. They were dressed as northerners so I assumed they were speaking Hausa. I said to him something like, “Well, maybe one day I will learn Hausa and be able to speak Hausa with you.” He said, “We are not speaking Hausa, we're speaking

Kanuri.” You make these generalizations but just because someone is from the east doesn't mean he is Ibo, he could be Ijaw or he could be Ibibio. He could be a number of things.

There was a certain tribal chauvinism. One of the things that happened at the time of the transition to the civilian government, prior to the elections, the military government had decided they would break up the four regions of the country and create I think 19 or 21 states. This would then allow some of the smaller but still fairly large tribal groups to have “their own state.”

What I observed as an outsider was there is no end to that. I have seen this also in Czechoslovakia. There is no end to it because you take the eastern region and you split off two Ibo dominated states and the Rivers State, which was dominated by Ijaw and the Cross River State which is dominated by Efik and so on. But then you still have smaller minorities in those states that feel that they are being gypped out of all the development money. It became very important during the time I was in Nigeria, because all these new states had been created, and they needed state assemblies, therefore state assembly buildings. They needed a governor's mansion, they needed a university, they needed all this infrastructure that they felt every state should have equally with every other state. So you take a state like Oyo where Ibadan is located and they already had Ibadan and they already had the university there, they already had the old regional assembly building, and all the existing infrastructure.

In the new states there were contracts up the kazoo to come in and build these things; the cement importing, the rebar, and everybody had his fingers in those pies. I mean even if he was in the national legislature, he was concerned about what was going on in his home state and was very concerned to know what construction company was importing what cement so that he could get a piece of that action.

The tribal thing was important in the sense that “we need our own,” not just because we are being trod upon by the other guy, but because also if we get our own state — and they continued to sub-divide them — if we get our own state, we will then have our own little piece of the oil money. All the money was coming from the distribution of the petroleum proceeds. So our way to get our hands on that petroleum money is to create our own state and then have to construct the infrastructure that went with it.

I would say to friends, “This is a very expensive process and it is wasteful” and they'd say, “Oh, you just don't understand. We need to have this. You have 50 states.” I said, “Yes, but we got those by taking over everybody else's land, not by subdividing what we already had.”

Q: Was there a feeling at that time that the oil money was getting distributed fairly well?

WEINLAND: I don't know how to answer that question. A huge amount of it, from the point of view of an American observing it, was going for very wasteful projects that were never going to go anywhere. There continues to this day to be argument about the distribution of the oil money. I don't know that any group or business was ever totally satisfied with the way it was being distributed and what formulae there were. There is a federal body tasked with working out the distribution formula, which changes every time new states are created, but there is always controversy about the formulae it comes up with.

The effort to diversify and create other sources of income from industries around the country was a very halting and slow process.

Q: From our perspective, how did we view Soviet influence in the area?

WEINLAND: We were worried about it. There was one huge project that the Soviets were financing, a steel complex in a town called Ajaokuta, and there were a lot of Soviets brought in to work on it. The Soviets were putting money into it but they were also using Nigerian money. It had been supposedly a big gift from the Soviet Union, but you have to

build roads to the place and other infrastructure, and the project was never completed. It just went on and on and on. But it gave the Soviets a reason to be there and every time you would say, “Well, the U.S. is doing X and Y for you” but “The Soviets are building us this steel plant and we have to have a steel plant”. It was always something we kind of kept an eye on.

Q: Were the French of influence?

WEINLAND: Not as much as they are in Francophone Africa, by any means, but they wanted an in. Of course, the British were the colonial power, so they sort of assumed that they had some rights to be there.

Q: You were doing this until '79?

WEINLAND: No, I arrived in '79 so I left in '81, halfway through the first term of the civilian government.

Q: When you left did you feel it was taking hold?

WEINLAND: I did, rather foolishly, but I did. I left behind some good friends that I thought were going to help build the country. However, as the next presidential election approached, scheduled for 1983, there began to be conflict between the Hausa and Yoruba members of the governing party over who the nominee would be, and shortly after the election, the military stepped in and took over.

Q: Where did you go then?

WEINLAND: I came back to FSI (Foreign Service Institute) for a year of training in Czech. I studied Czech for a year and then I went to Prague.

Q: So you were in Prague from?

WEINLAND: '82 to '84.

Q: So this was still high communist time, wasn't it?

WEINLAND: Yes, very much.

Q: How did you feel about going to Czechoslovakia?

WEINLAND: Well, you know, I bid on a whole range of things and that's the one that came up. I can't even remember what else I bid on but I did want to have another political officer job. I must have bid on a few jobs in Africa. I am trying to remember because there were two different times. I think that was the time I had a CDO who was not particularly sympathetic to me. I think I bid on jobs in maybe Mogadishu and Lusaka as well as Prague and a couple of others. Prague was the one I got.

Q: You were in Czechoslovakia, again this was '81?

WEINLAND: '82 to '84.

Q: What was the situation in Czechoslovakia when you arrived?

WEINLAND: Well, they had, of course, a very Soviet-tied communist government with one of the then aging and ultimately aged heads of state, Gustav Husak. The government was secondary to the party structure. There was, by the time I arrived, a very recognizable dissident movement, an opposition movement called “Charter 77.” That had formed in the wake of the adoption of the Helsinki final document. I frankly think that the Soviets made one of their major, major mistakes in signing on to the Helsinki agreements. They thought the basket of human rights issues and free movements of peoples was a throw away to get the security arrangements they wanted.

Q: They wanted those firm boundaries.

WEINLAND: Yes, they wanted the firm boundaries; they wanted more military cooperation and transparency. But for us, of course, the human rights issues were equally important.

Q: Well, Kissinger at the time did not feel that.

WEINLAND: He thought it was a throw away.

Q: He thought it was a throwaway too.

WEINLAND: It wasn't until Carter came in that the human rights issues assumed an equivalent importance, but anyway, the Soviets had signed on to it. So the Charter 77 group, what they did was to write a document that was published in January of 1977, mostly drafted by Vaclav Havel. It emphasized that the Czech government, along with all the others, had signed this document that said that the following arrangements should exist. They were saying, “OK, we want our government to guarantee to us these rights that are outlined in these final documents.”

They published the Charter and, of course, the regime went absolutely crazy trying to collect all the copies of it they could. But of course, it was out in the open and then the government tried to force — this is all back in '77, '78 — they were trying to force people in their workplaces to sign all these counter petitions that these “Chartists” were rabble rousers and trouble makers. Then in fact, a year or two later they began to arrest some of the leading proponents of Charter 77, including Havel himself and others too.

By the time I arrived — I am trying to think — I guess Havel was arrested in '79 and by the time I arrived he had been in prison about three years. Some of the others had been released but the government was continuing to harass them.

Charter 77 had an interesting structure. There were three different types of people who signed the charter. By the time I was there the total number of signatories I think was about 2,000. It never got to be much more than that.

So there was a group who were old communists who were upset at how the Prague Spring had been suppressed in 1969. There were the “bourgeois” types who had never been communists and who had always been discriminated against in their education and in their work. Havel was in that group. And then there were the religious people who wanted the right to practice their religion freely. Every year the Chartists chose spokespersons, three leaders of the Charter group, one from each of those different groups, with the idea that with a co-leadership of that kind, they could cover if somebody got picked up, there was always somebody else who was able to step in and continue organizing the constant stream of documents they were issuing and to support all the others.

So when I got there, all that was functioning pretty well; Havel was still in prison and the government was pretty tightly controlling everything.

Q: At the embassy, who was the ambassador?

WEINLAND: When I arrived, it was Jack Matlock; he was there for my first year, and then he was replaced by William Luers. The DCM when I arrived was Marty Wenick, and he was replaced by Bill Farrand, so those were the two teams I worked under.

Q: What were you doing, what was your part of the action?

WEINLAND: We had a combined political/economic section. There was a political/economic counselor, Jim Connell; I was the political officer under him and Nick Lang was the economic officer.

One of my big jobs was the human rights report and the CSCE (Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe) reports.

Q: CSCE being?

WEINLAND: Every six months all the western NATO members individually produced a report on the compliance of Czechoslovakia with all the Helsinki final agreements; we had to submit ours to Congress. The others presumably sent theirs to their governments. We would have a big meeting of all the people at my level who were preparing the reports in their respective embassies and share all the information we had about Czech compliance with the various baskets of the Helsinki final agreement. So we would go around the table and say things like some of our citizens applied to have their relatives come out and they weren't permitted, and this guy we know is in jail, and that person couldn't get a visa to come in to do business, and we've announced these military exercises. So we went over the whole range of baskets, whether our businessmen were getting access and all our individual issues with the Czech government.

And then I also did the human rights report.

I was also the person in that section in the embassy who lived off campus so to speak. We have a gorgeous embassy in Prague, an old palace, and we had a lot of apartments in that building. So both my boss and Nick Lang lived in the embassy itself and I lived out in town in an embassy-rented apartment. I was the one designated to entertain the dissidents. Even though they were all followed and the government knew what was going on in my house, the dissidents felt easier coming to a place that wasn't quite so heavily surveilled as the embassy. That started somewhat later after I got there.

Marty Wenick, the DCM, was approached by a man named Jiri Dienstbier, a Charter signatory and a leader in the Charter group, one of the old communist guys, who had been a journalist. Dienstbier asked Marty if there was some way they could get together with people in the American Embassy. My own impression is that at that time the Czech government and party had come to some conclusion that Charter was not going to grow out of bounds, that there were never going to be more than about 2,000 signatories because there was a fairly steady but low grade rate of emigration when people just said, “I can't take this anymore.” They would get permission to emigrate. They would leave and

a few more people would sign but it was always a fairly steady membership. I think that the authorities must have decided that some amount of contact with foreign diplomats was not going to be a serious disruption.

I never talked about this with any of my colleagues in other embassies in any direct way, but I am pretty sure the Canadians, the Germans, the French were all in contact with dissidents in one way or another. Certainly, everybody in all these embassies, not everybody but for example, if you were in a writer or an artist in Czechoslovakia and you wanted to get your work out to the West, a lot of that went out through embassy contact.

We were approached by Jiri Dienstbier. He said the Chartists would be interested in getting to know some American diplomats. so I was asked if I would host these people in my apartment. The VHS videotape system had just come in, so we set up a system by which we could get fairly recent movies. Somebody was always going out to Germany and we found a video store there that was willing to let us rent tapes for a week or two without penalty. Now I am going to say we were doing something illegal, but the tapes would arrive at the embassy and we would then spend all night, some of us, copying these tapes and then we would return them to West Germany. So we began to build up a fairly good library.

Q: These were tapes of. . .?

WEINLAND: American movies, yes. So then we began then to invite these people and we would just say to Dienstbier and a couple of other people, we are going to show this movie on this night. Anyone who wants to come can come — because they were all self invited. There was a huge amount of paranoia, obviously, among all these people. They would eye someone and say, 'Who is that person, I have never met him before," and that kind of thing. But they were self invited and they would come and watch the video. By this time Havel was out of prison, so he was very often there with his brother, Ivan, and they would be huddled off in the corner. I have this image of him sitting in the corner of my sofa in the living room, talking with other Charter leaders, and they would be drafting and correcting

all these various Charter documents that they issued. That's how we always got copies of the Charter documents. I would then take them back to the embassy, I translated them. We had a translator, but we didn't give him things like that so I would translate them. That went on until I left and my successor took over.

Q: What were the Czech authorities doing? Were they puncturing your tires, were they giving you a rough time or what?

WEINLAND: One time I had a bunch of embassy people from various Western embassies over to see a film. We were a very tight diplomatic corps because no official Czechs would ever come to any of our dinner parties, so we all just entertained each other. We were pretty close. So one night they were leaving, and a couple of them came back to my apartment door and said, “Somebody has poured red paint all over your car.” Sure enough, I had red paint over every single panel of my car, which was parked out front, and a handmade PLO flag had been stuck under my windshield wiper. It turned out that they had vandalized two other cars at some distance from where my car was, one in front of Marty Wenick's house where he was also showing a movie and also the defense attach#'s car. So they vandalized these three cars.

I was not given what we called the Tatra treatment; Tatras were the big cars, but following me, I only ever had the Soviet version of the Fiat, a Lada, and the Czech car, the Skoda, those were the two that followed me. If they really wanted to get you, they would put the Tatras on your tail, but I never got that treatment.

Q: You got the lower grade surveillance.

WEINLAND: But there were always six people behind me, wherever I was driving, in three different cars and that was a fact of life.

Q: Could you travel around much?

WEINLAND: Yes, we were not restricted in internal travel. For official visits, of course, we had to submit a note saying where we wanted to go and whom we wanted to meet, but going in and out of the country or just taking a holiday and going to some hotel in the mountains or something — we were free to do that.

Q: Did you get much of a chance to sort of mix and mingle with regular Czechs?

WEINLAND: We always had to let the initiative come from them. That was our rule of thumb. Obviously, the dissidents came to see us, and then there were a few other people who didn't come to those film parties but who were happy to have me drop in and were in some way or other in the dissident community but not maybe overtly.

One incredible episode I will never forget was on one of the holidays, I think it may have been May Day, the first year I was there. I had gone to the May Day parade and came home and was in my apartment. The doorbell rang and there was a totally strange woman standing there with a huge bunch of daffodils. She asked after somebody who had lived in that apartment before I did, the chief consular officer, who had left post and had gone to Vienna, I think. She said, “Is Mr. So and So here?” And I said, “No, he's left. He's gone to Vienna,” and she said, “Well, these are for you” and she handed me the daffodils. I said, “What for, what are they for?” and she said, “for friendship” and before I could even say, “Won't you come in and have a cup of coffee?” she darted off down the stairs. She obviously wanted to make a statement, didn't want to be photographed or bugged or anything.

Q: I always think of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union involving sitting around the kitchen table talking about things. Did you get involved in sessions of that nature?

WEINLAND: With Czechs?

Q: Yes.

WEINLAND: Maybe with a couple of the couples whom I used to drop in on who had made it clear they were happy to have me drop by. Interestingly, I have subsequently learned that the husband of one of them was reporting the entire time to the secret police. His wife was a survivor of Auschwitz, she was the only one of her family who had survived Auschwitz, and so I would talk to her from time to time about some of the issues confronting the Jewish community.

That was another one of my reporting responsibilities — to liaise with some of the churches. I did a huge airgram on all the different religious denominations. I mean, there were only like 5 or 6,000 Jews left in Prague at that point, but it was interesting to know what they were doing.

Q: Was the regime anti-Semitic or not?

WEINLAND: I don't think particularly. I mean, the Jewish community along with all the other denominations were officially recognized. Their rabbi was presumably paid as were all the other religious leaders. I am trying to think if any of the people in the main Central Committee or government was Jewish. There had been a terrible round of purge trials in the early '50s, the Slansky trials. Those had been overtly and horribly anti-Semitic but I don't think that was a factor by the time I was there.

Q: What about the Catholic Church at this time; the Catholic Church in neighboring Poland was a visible center of resistance to the regime. You had a Polish Pope and the communists never really were able to deal successfully with the Catholic Church in Poland. What about Czechoslovakia?

WEINLAND: The Czech communists hated that Pope. The press always called him “That man, Wojtyla.'

Q: This was the party?

WEINLAND: The party, yes. The Catholic Church was in a difficult position, because it was the only denomination with a truly international hierarchy, so the Czechs were very nervous about them, compared to the Protestant denominations over which they could exercise more control. From the point of view of the population, all the churches were an attractive way to exercise some form of opposition to the regime, if you were willing to make the sacrifices that it involved, like not being able to go on with higher education, and being restricted in employment and that kind of thing. Before I got there, I think it was, Pope John Paul II had issued a statement aimed mostly at the liberation theologians of Central and South America. It was essentially pointed at saying you could not be a priest of the church and also engage in overtly political activity, particularly activity that embraced a view of Jesus as a revolutionary or social reformer.

It was interesting because at about the same time the Czech authorities organized a regime-sponsored peace movement they called Pacem in Terris, and all the bishops and all the clergy were asked to sign on as members of this organization. The organization had all this anodyne language about anti-nuclear policies and anti-war sentiments. So the Catholic clergy and the bishops turned to Cardinal Tomasek, the Czech Archbishop, who was already rather old, in his 80s, and said, “Are we allowed to sign this document?”

So Tomasek referred it to the Pope and he said, “Is this considered to be political activity on the part of the priests?” There was a waiting period for a while, when everyone was uncertain but then in the end the Pope said it was political activity and bishops and priests, particularly the bishops they were concerned about, the bishops may not sign it and remain in good standing.

And so Tomasek instructed all the people under his authority and it became a real struggle between the regime and the Catholic Church. The regime wanted to enroll the Catholic Church into their anti-war, anti-nuclear, anti-West movement, because this was the time when we in the West were placing short range missiles in Europe.

Q: This is the SS-20, the Pershing.

WEINLAND: What are the slow ones? The Cruise missiles were being deployed in Germany and then the Soviets were deploying their SS-20s in a couple of places in Czechoslovakia.

The regime desperately wanted to have the Catholic Church as one of the two biggest denominations behind them. They couldn't get the Pope to go along and Tomasek would not fold. There was just this standoff, they never did resolve it. What happened was gradually the bishops began to die off, and the Pope would nominate somebody to take the position and the regime would refuse to let him have it. By the time the regime changed, five years later, there were something like 15 empty bishoprics. It was a very significant number of bishoprics that had never been refilled.

Tomasek himself actually survived until the end of the communist regime and never gave in. He was an incredible man.

The Protestant churches were less harassed because I think in those cases the denominational head could kind of make an agreement with the regime and they didn't have the same kind of authority over the general clergy. The problem would come when a clergyman actually signed the Charter. He would then lose his license to perform clerical duties. That happened to Catholics as well as to Protestants. If a clergyman agreed to be under the political authority of the director of religious affairs, an office in the government, he then had to report once a month to the office of religious of affairs and show copies of all his sermons. Of course, you couldn't get married legally in the church; you had to go to town hall; they couldn't do funerals and other pastoral services, but they could preside over Sunday services. If they could do that, they could continue in this very uneasy relationship, while the Catholics really were under more pressure to knuckle under and individually join the official peace movement.

I was close friends with a Baptist minister and went often to his services, and so I would ask him about his minders. He just preached the gospel. He stayed well away from anything controversial in his sermons. People like him and all the other clergymen I talked to essentially had the attitude of, I am called to serve the spiritual needs of people and if we all oppose the regime, there won't be anybody who can meet these needs. Therefore, I won't go along with anything overtly pro-communist. Each person had to carve out his own area of comfort.

Q: Was there any give at all within the regime towards the Western position or was it a very hard line?

WEINLAND: It was quite hard line. I would not have gone as note taker for any substantive meetings either with the DCM or the ambassador. That would have been my boss who would have gone. The press was uniformly very anti-West. I was taking language lessons through the embassy while I was there. I would go down and meet with my language teacher. One day she said, “Look at what Rude Pravo has in the paper today” and it was a whole explanation of the American health system and how much it cost for cancer treatment, heart surgery and other big ticket health issues. “Isn't this outrageous what they are printing about the United States in Rude Pravo? This can't be true.” And I said, “Of course, it's true. That is what it costs for cancer treatment or some other kinds of heroic measures when people are very ill. Of course, it also does not say,” (of course in those days) “that most people are covered by some form of insurance or other so the insurance pays most of those costs. We have to pay for our own insurance.” But she instinctively didn't believe anything that the press published about the West because the people were just so suspicious of anything.

Q: Did you get the feeling, I think it was about this time I talked to people who served in Poland and they said that in Poland it was sort of the word of mouth was that there were probably at least three dedicated communists in the whole country. Did you get the feeling

that OK, they're going along with it but there was just no substance, I mean there was nothing behind this, outside of fear or just getting along.

WEINLAND: Yes, I think that's true. If people wanted to be engineers or doctors or things like that, they had to go along in order to do something that was interesting to them. The only people who were getting any serious benefit from it were the party hierarchy and the various ministers and so on.

The Czechs, I think are unlike the Poles. This was at the time of Solidarity in Poland. It was a little after the height of Solidarity. The Czechs were cynical about the Poles, sort of "Oh, there the Poles go again, making all this trouble. They are always doing these heroic, fruitless things, getting their heads bashed for nothing. We Czechs, we just sort of live with it. We know you aren't going to be able to change it."

That's why I think the Charter Movement never really grew to being as big and well-supported as Solidarity was.

Q: You left there when?

WEINLAND: '84.

Q: Did you think you had five years to go before the whole system would collapse?

WEINLAND: Absolutely not. It looked as though it would just grind on. We were there during the time Brezhnev died and then there were the two rapid changes, Andropov and Chernenko. I forget which came first and died.

Q: I think it was Andropov first and then Chernenko and then Gorbachev.

WEINLAND: I don't think Gorbachev was in office when I left. I think that was just a little bit later.

Even when I went to Berlin five years later, I never thought what happened would happen. And the Czechs were pretty much as hardnosed as the — the East Germans were the worst — but I think the Czechs were not too far behind.

Q: One does get the feeling that the Czechs weren't going to raise their heads too much. The Prague Spring was enough.

WEINLAND: Was enough, yes. That was lesson enough and too many people got their heads chopped off.

Q: Were you aware of people who had done well, or been professional people and after the Prague Spring had sort of lost everything?

WEINLAND: Well, Dubcek was still around and he obviously had lost out. There was a man who had been a foreign minister, I think under Dubcek, Hajek, and I think he was still in the country, but a lot of them who were prominent political types had decamped and gone West, as had many of the intelligentsia like Kundera and Milos Forman and some of the writers and so on, many of whom were actually running #migr# presses. They were very much involved in publishing the writing that was coming from people who were still in the country.

Q: Was the hand of the Soviets pretty visible?

WEINLAND: They kept out of sight. Occasionally you would see young, Soviet soldiers sight-seeing in Prague, but their military presence was out of the cities. It was in bases outside town. The embassy of course, was a big embassy but I don't think we had any contacts with each other, I can't think anybody in our embassy was paling around with any of them, and, of course, we had non-fraternization rules that were pretty damned strict. You would have been a little bit crazy unless ordered to do so, to meet with them.

Q: With the community, for example, were the Yugoslavs considered a good source because they sort of had a foot in both camps or not?

WEINLAND: I would assume if that was going on, it was our cousins who were doing some of that.

Q: They just weren't, you didn't have any . . .

WEINLAND: I didn't know any Yugoslav.

Q: How about other embassies? Did you all get together and share impressions?

WEINLAND: Yes, we had a very interesting group of people, of whom I was one, called the Secretaries Club. We were first and second secretaries in our embassies. We had 12 or 15 members at any one time; many NATO embassies, so we had a Norwegian, a Canadian, the Brit, the French, Italian and then we had some who were from other countries like Japan, Egypt, Brazil. We had monthly lunches that we rotated hosting, always with huge amounts of wine. It was really funny because we would all be sitting at the table telling stories back and forth. We had an Austrian. They were still neutral and not in the EU or anything. Some of them, like the Egyptian, had much more contact with Czechs than we did. The Japanese guy who arrived halfway through the time I was there, had actually had an earlier posting when he did nothing while he was in Prague but study Czech. He spoke a perfect Czech and a perfect English and listened to the radio all the time, which most of us didn't do and watched TV, but he just really had his ear to the ground and was always able to share a lot of scuttlebutt about what was going on.

I loved being at the lunches and watching the Egyptian colleague writing in Arabic, the Japanese in his language. We all had little notepads; we'd be making notes throughout the lunch.

Q: Were the Chinese there?

WEINLAND: They were there but I don't think we had any contact, at least I didn't.

Q: Where did you go afterwards?

WEINLAND: I went straight to Kigali, Rwanda.

Q: That brings you to an interesting place. You are off to Kigali?

WEINLAND: I am off to Kigali.

Q: And you were in Kigali from when to when?

WEINLAND: I arrived in July of 1984 and I left in February of 1986.

Q: Who was the ambassador there?

WEINLAND: The ambassador was John Blane. It was a very small embassy in those days; five officers, one American secretary and two communicators.

Q: What was your job?

WEINLAND: I was the deputy chief of mission.

Q: Were you aware that this was a period of time when the Foreign Service was beginning to put a great deal of emphasis on getting women into positions of authority, particularly in DCM jobs and all or not?

WEINLAND: I do not believe the Department at that time was very interested in that because there were only three female DCMs worldwide. There were more female ambassadors. The other two DCMs were April Glaspie and Arlene Render.

I went to see John Blane personally. I was back in the Department the previous summer, when I was on leave, and was putting my bid list together and I learned he was in town

and so I went down to talk to him. He, of course, was given a short list of people from whom to choose a DCM, and I was the one with whom he had had a personal encounter so he picked me.

He was a very good person on women's issues. He was married to a woman named Diane Blane. They had met when they were both in Cameroon, and she was with USAID and he was on the State side, and they met and married there. According to what the Department did in those days, they told her that if she married, she would have to resign. John said to her, “Don't resign, make them throw you out.” So she did not resign and eventually she got a letter separating her from the service. A few years after that, the Department lost that lawsuit and they had to allow married women to serve in the Foreign Service, and Deedee was reinstated almost without any to-do because she had never resigned. She was, by the way, one of the Mount Holyoke political science department people, so she came in from being at Mount Holyoke.

Q:Kigali is the capital of?

WEINLAND: Rwanda.

Q:You arrived there when?

WEINLAND: I arrived in July of 1984. At that time there was a one-party government in power; the MRND (Mouvement R#volutionaire National pour le D#veloppement), which was headed by Juvenal Habyarimana. He had led a military coup that put him in as head of government. I am trying to think if he had actually resigned from the army by the time I arrived, but I think he was still actually a general in the army. The army was the power behind the throne, although the country had all the trappings of a civilian government; I think they even had an assembly of some kind, but it was a one-party assembly so it was not particularly democratic.

Q: What had been the recent history? Had there been a Hutu-Tutsi clash in recent times there or not?

WEINLAND: Well, there had been, from time to time, since well before independence really. And I will now get into hot water, because my thoughts on these subjects are not necessarily universally adopted by academics who have studied the place.

Rwanda and Burundi had originally been part of German East Africa, so after the First World War, when the German possessions were divided up, the responsibility of the League of Nations Protectorates over those two countries was given to Belgium, which of course, was the colonizing power of the entire Belgian Congo, right next door. The Belgians didn't do any favors for either Rwanda or Burundi.

Q: Or for the Congo, either.

WEINLAND: Or for the Congo. They kept them pretty backward. But of course, they were under League of Nations' and then UN authority, so they had to be somewhat less violent than they were in the Congo.

In my view, this whole Hutu-Tutsi thing really was exacerbated under the Belgians, who encouraged the Tutsis — the King of Rwanda at the time was a Tutsi — and they encouraged the Tutsis who were only about 10 to 15 % of the population to think of themselves as a more highly developed kind of African than the Hutu. This was partly because they were tall, they had high foreheads, they had narrow noses, and you know all this specious, social Darwinism stuff. So the Belgians ruled indirectly through the Tutsi kingdom.

Coming in underneath that level was a whole group of Belgian priests and missionaries, many of whom were from the minority area of Belgium — and I always get mixed up

whether they were the Flamands or the other ones — but anyway who did not come from the same class as the governors.

Q: Probably the Flamands because now they are kind of on top, but for a long time French speaking group ran things.

WEINLAND: OK, so it was the non-French speaking, although they did speak French. They began to encourage the Hutu to read the gospel and to think about things like all men are equal in the eyes of God and so as things were beginning to build toward independence, there seems to be some argument at least that these missionary fathers encouraged the Hutu to challenge the political authority of the Tutsi. There was an incident in which a young boy was attacked and the whole place went up in flames.

So from the time of independence, that I think was 1961, there was already great tension. There had been a lot of violence; many, many Tutsi had already gone into exile, either in Tanzania or in Uganda. The king took refuge in Kenya and so on. So there was already a very large diaspora of Tutsi, even at the time of independence.

So Rwanda became independent and not too long after independence — here my facts begin to get a little fuzzy — there was a man, Gr#goire Kayibanda, who came into power who was a very rabid Hutu power kind of person. The other problem was always this mirror thing that went on between Burundi and Rwanda. Whenever the Tutsi in Burundi were massacring Hutu, then Hutu in Rwanda would massacre Tutsi. There was this very nasty kind of stuff that would play off against itself.

Somewhere in the middle of all this, in 1973, Kayibanda was displaced by a military coup. The Hutus remained in power, but not so much this very rigid, right wing group of Hutu. The new head of state, Habyarimana, had a wife, Agathe, who had a big family and she and her family were operators behind the scenes, very much pushing their clans to the front, people who came from the northwest. So there was a lot of tension in the country.

In '84 when I got there, all of this was totally below the surface. After the excitement and energy of Nigeria, it just seemed like the most placid place; you could drive anywhere you wanted in your private car, never be molested, everybody seemed to be doing OK. That was what the situation was when I arrived. It appeared that there was some effort to bring the warring groups together but I think probably under the surface there was tension. You know, it is a very mountainous country, very hilly. It is called “the land of a thousand hills” and like a lot of mountainous peoples, they are very closed in. It was much harder to get to know Rwandans than to get to know Nigerians. I have a feeling a lot was going on that they never, ever told us about. You know, it would have been just like telling somebody outside the family. I just have the feeling that we really didn't have a way of getting a handle on it. I think even the people who worked for us in the embassy didn't speak of it much. We had quite a number of Tutsi who worked for us in the embassy because there were these very strict quotas everywhere else and so it was easier for them to be employed by us than by banks and insurance companies and other concerns. I don't remember ever having a really open conversation about these particular issues with any of them.

Q: At that point, what were American interests there?

WEINLAND: Mostly USAID. We had a pretty big USAID operation and so did a lot of other countries because Rwanda was considered to be relatively free of corruption. The needs were pretty obvious and pretty severe, so it was a wonderful place for people who were interested in development to be active. We had probably a bigger USAID office than we had embassy office. We had a very small Peace Corps program that I, in fact, had to direct because there was no Peace Corps director. We had very few American citizens in the country. I think our largest export to Rwanda was used clothing. We did not import a huge amount from there. Their major exports were tea, coffee and cassiterite. What is that? Some other mineral is made from cassiterite ore. Tin.

Q: How did you find the government there?

WEINLAND: Some of the ministers. . . I am trying to think which ministers were government agencies I worked with the most; I worked with the foreign ministry, I worked with the justice ministry because I had to write the human rights report, I worked with one man in the defense department because I also had to administer the foreign military assistance program which was quite small. So there I was; the Peace Corps director, the director of military assistance and the DCM.

The justice minister was a very friendly, nice guy. I think he had his own interests in presenting his government in the best light, and so he was eager to show us around prisons and things like that.

The foreign ministry. There was a rather difficult foreign minister and a nice, but not particularly effective deputy minister, and then the number three guy in foreign ministry was one of these go-to guys, you know, if you needed something done, he was the one you went to. He was one of the leading g#nocidaires. He has just been tried in Tanzania and found guilty of genocide.

Q: Were we monitoring the Hutu-Tutsi business there?

WEINLAND: Not in any constant way. I think we probably accepted too easily the propaganda the government was putting out that they had all these programs that were designed to overcome that kind of division and they were not, I don't think that they were really even allowed to discuss it. I think it was sort of all done under the rug. Certainly, they weren't going to talk to us about it.

We were aware of course, there had occasionally — I guess I should back up. Occasionally, this Tutsi diaspora would mount an invasion back into Rwanda. I think they did that twice before the time I got there after independence and were repulsed by the Rwandan army. So there was always that threat on the border. While I was there, we had

a combined political/consular officer, and she tracked the whole question of Tutsi refugees because there was some effort to resettle them and the UN was anxious that there should be some kind of policy that would permit people to return.

The real problem from the point of view of the Habyarimana government was that Rwanda was probably one of the one or two most densely populated countries in the world. It is very hilly, very few towns and the towns were very small; even Kigali was quite small. Almost everybody lived in family compounds out on the hills and they made their living by agriculture. The number of children in any family was usually between six and eight. They usually had between one and two hectares of land.

So you are talking about bringing 60,000 Tutsis with their cows back into the country and where is the land to resettle these people? Even though there was some effort to do this, it just never got off the ground. Occasionally, there would be an effort to bring some in and then it would get out of hand. They would put them back over the border. It just really was a mess.

Q: The border with Zaire?

WEINLAND: No, the border with Uganda.

Q: These were Tutsi forces that were there?

WEINLAND: Yes. This was during the last push when Museveni was making a bid to topple the government of Uganda. I think there had been a successor government to Obote in Uganda, and Museveni, who is now the president in Uganda, had a rebellion going that was gaining force. Many of his soldiers were actually Tutsi Rwandan refugees, including the present president of Rwanda. He was in Uganda. So they were fighting alongside Museveni getting military training, learning how to fight a war and they ultimately did take over the capital of Uganda in 1985 or '86. It would have been just before I left. They managed to move in and take over the capital.

But at this same time there was all this uncertainty along that border because you know, if the government of Uganda at that time had prevailed, then what was going to happen to these Tutsis who had been living there for a generation? It was really a pretty complicated business.

We were keeping a very close eye on the whole refugee issue and the political/consular officer was liaising very tightly with the UN people who were in Rwanda and also with some of the other embassies that were keeping an eye on things.

Q: Did we have much contact with what was happening over in Zaire?

WEINLAND: I don't recall that a great deal was going on in Zaire right at that particular time. There was a regional organization that didn't do a great deal but had multi-country projects called CEPGL (Conf#d#ration des Pays des Grands Lacs), so all the countries that surrounded the big Rift lakes that go down that central spine of Africa, Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Uganda and Tanzania, were all members of CEPGL. We were monitoring that, but in terms of any cross-border violence in Congo, I don't think that was a time when much of that was happening.

Q: In the two years you were there, any major developments?

WEINLAND: I was only there a year and a half. I think we made some breakthrough on family planning through USAID. I was quite intent on building up the Peace Corps a bit more, and so I was working hard, not only to get another volunteer or two into the country, but also to get a director out there. I think there was a time when a whole bunch of refugees came into the country and then had to leave, and that was a pretty difficult business. We signed a number of development agreements with the country. You know, some millions here and some millions there for agricultural development and things like that.

Q: It sounds like you may have had a small Peace Corps but I would imagine that they found it a good place to work, didn't they?

WEINLAND: I don't know. As I say, it was difficult to get to know Rwandans. We had I think seven volunteers when I left. We had two at each of the university campuses and in one case it was a married couple. They did their thing and they got to know some of the other faculty members so I think they had a fairly good time.

The two who were at the other campus, I think particularly the man, felt somewhat isolated. It just was hard for him to get to know people. We had two guys who were working on two different forestry projects and so they weren't living in the same place; they were in two different parts of the country and I think they found it also somewhat isolating. The final volunteer was a physical therapist who was working in a rehab hospital for polio victims, mostly polio kids, I think, and for her, I think she had a good experience because there were a couple of other expatriate workers, missionaries, volunteers, so there was a community. I mean, it was a hospital community and a friendlier sort of place.

The two foresters, and also to some extent the people who were at the universities, often came into Kigali and would stay at my house and would watch TV all night just to get a little relief.

Q: What was the gorilla situation?

WEINLAND: Gorillas, I forgot to mention the gorillas.

There were two or three different organizations that were working on the gorillas. One was led by the American citizen, Dian Fossey, and another was headed at that time by a Belgian guy and there was an American who worked in that group too. There was a great deal of friction between the two because Dian Fossey wanted to do research. She wanted

to do her own thing, she didn't want anyone else to come and look at the gorillas. She didn't want to use them as a commodity for tourism. She was a very prickly character.

The other group felt that they should protect the gorillas and protect their habitat, get the government of Rwanda behind the idea of keeping the national park intact. With all this land hunger, there was a great deal of pressure to continually take farmland away from the edges of the park that was on the peaks of the volcanoes in the north. They felt the thing to do was to convince the communities that were on the border of the park that they would benefit if the gorillas to some extent could become a tourist commodity, controlled, and that using the money that could be developed from charging people money to go look at the gorillas, they could help to develop their communities. People who were living on these family compounds all through this area could get work at the park headquarters as guides and other workers.

And so there was tension between the two approaches, which I think you find in almost any wildlife preservation situation. At the very end of my tour there, and in fact, when I was in the United States having some medical work done that ultimately led to the curtailment of my posting, that was the time when Dian Fossey was murdered.

There are always different theories about who did it; the Rwandans tried in absentia the other American who was at the camp at the time she was murdered, who discovered her body. They found him guilty. I think probably he did not do it. I have asked other people who were assigned there at the time, and they felt he was a somewhat emotional and strange guy but they felt that on balance he had not done it. I think maybe the conclusion is that it was someone Fossey had run afoul of , who had some kind of economic interest in selling gorillas to zoos, who knows? I mean, there was a lot of that going on too. People would go and grab some young gorillas and sell them to some zoo somewhere.

Anyway, the murder was a real consular challenge because you know, she was 10,000 feet up the mountain and to try to keep the body OK until there could be directions about

what to do — she didn't really have much family in the United States — and where to bury her. It really was a challenge for the consular officer and a little bit for me when I went back for a short while. It took a long time to play out.

Q: This was basically a relatively tranquil time, wasn't it?

WEINLAND: Yes, I would say it was. It was a very comfortable existence for expatriates there because things generally worked. There were relatively simple ways to get good supplies of food. There were international supermarkets that had regular import privileges, so the absence of any commissary wasn't a problem for us. We could get good, nourishing food.

As I said, it was very safe; you could drive all over the place and it seemed on the surface to be tranquil. But I don't think it was.

Q: You finally left there, you say you had to go back for medical treatment but when did you finally leave?

WEINLAND: I had left for the medical treatment in December of '85 and I was allowed to return to post for something like two or three weeks in January and I left finally about the 15th of February. I was still the charg#; John Blane had left in July and the State Department had dilly-dallied around trying to appoint a new ambassador and so I was charg#. I had to get special permission to go back to the States for these medical tests. I just insisted that I be able to go back. They finally had a new ambassador and I could go back and get him properly credentialed and instated and so on and so forth.

Q: Who was the new ambassador?

WEINLAND: The new ambassador was a political appointee named John Upston.

Q: Why would a political appointee want that job?

WEINLAND: That is a very good question. He was a person who had been in and out of the State Department depending on the current makeup of the administration. He had specialized in Caribbean affairs, so with Reagan he had come back into the Department and had worked on something called the Caribbean Basin Initiative with, I think, the vision to be appointed ambassador to one of the Caribbean nations but that didn't work out for him so he got Rwanda.

Q: Well, so you left him there?

WEINLAND: I left him there, the day after he presented his credentials to President Habyarimana.

Q: So what happened to you?

WEINLAND: Well, of course, I was off phase, I hadn't had a chance to bid on anything, blah, blah, blah and that was pretty much the beginning of the end of my career, I think.

I came back and I was assigned to United Nations Affairs in the Bureau of International Organizations (IO/UNP). There was, however, somebody in the position who was a civil servant,, and there was this question, was he going, was he not, so I floated around for a while. He finally did go; as a sad footnote, I should add that this person, Ernie Griggs, died very shortly after and quite young of a cerebral aneurism. So I took over United Nations General Assembly affairs right about the time Alan Keyes came back to the Department to take over as Assistant Secretary for International Organizations. Alan Keyes had been one of the ambassadors to the UN under Jeanne Kirkpatrick; she finished her tour as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN. Vernon Walters took over that position, and he didn't want Alan Keyes on his staff. So Alan Keyes came back to the Department. So he was the head of the bureau. Then, frankly, they had trouble filling the rest of the management jobs in the bureau all the way around.

Q: You talk about Alan Keyes. He keeps running for president. I have heard stories about Alan Keyes. How about your stories about Alan Keyes?

WEINLAND: I have quite a few stories about Alan Keyes.

Q: Talk.

WEINLAND: One of the things that I really reproach him for is that he was probably the highest ranking African-American in the Department at the time and he did absolutely nothing to mentor or help develop other African-American officers who were junior to him and coming up in the Department.

He was totally ideological. I ran afoul of him; this is a somewhat complicated business. I ran afoul of him because, among other things in our office, we had to approve any travel outside the restricted zones for all the categories of UN personnel who came from countries we didn't like. There was an officer working under my supervision who actually did all the nitty-gritty of running around the Department and getting the clearances and so on, on all the applications for travel waivers.

Q: Well, these were people on whom we had put travel restrictions, because the countries were generally hostile to the U.S. Usually the restrictions were reciprocated on our diplomats in their countries, weren't they?

WEINLAND: Yes, but they also included groups like the PLO that we didn't even talk to at that time. Maybe we were just starting to talk to them but you know, the Soviets were under various kinds of restrictions, all the Eastern European countries, Libya maybe, I don't know, others.

One of the applications we had was, I think, from the top ranking person in the PLO office, who wanted to travel to Arlington or Alexandria, somewhere here in Virginia. A leading Palestinian had just died and the PLO representative wanted to come to the funeral and

pay respects to the family. There were many precedents for this kind of travel. There was going to be no public appearance, there was going to be no speechmaking, nothing that was at all inflammatory.

So the normal thing would have been to get a clearance from our office, OPM or whatever that thing is called that had all the diplomatic liaison responsibility, the Near East Bureau (NEA) and us. So the officer who worked under my direction ran around and got all these clearances and the cable was prepared and got signed off all the way up and off it went.

Alan Keyes had a source in the Diplomatic Liaison Office who reported to him that the cable had gone and that we were permitting this top ranking PLO representative to travel to Virginia. So I was called into the office director's, or acting director's office where Alan Keyes and I and the deputy assistant secretary and the acting director were all in there together. Alan Keyes was shouting that we were trying to embarrass him and what were we doing approving this kind of travel and everything. I said, “There is plenty of precedent for this. The man isn't making any public appearances, you know, it's a perfectly routine thing to allow him to come and meet privately with the family and attend the funeral.” And he was just beside himself, you know, that this was going to screw him up with AIPAC and all the pro-Israel people. Then he said he had to go off to a reception but he wanted somebody to get to the bottom of this and get back to him. Of course, it was after working hours; it was like 6:30 or so in the evening.

I couldn't get hold of my subordinate so I started calling around all the offices that had approved the travel and they all said, “Yeah, sure. It was perfectly routine, no problem.” In the second or third of these calls, I realized that the office acting director, who had been placed in that job by Alan Keyes as a true-believer and a ideological friend, was listening in to my phone calls. That's when I asked to be relieved of my duties to that office. I just said, “I can't work for people who don't trust me to do my job.” I didn't want to stay there any longer.

So that was that.

Q: Some people have said that Keyes had a tendency to bring the whole staff together and give long lectures to people who knew far more of the subject than he did. It was a distraction and there was a pretty high giggle quotient through portions of it. Did you find this?

WEINLAND: At the desk officer level, he decided when he came, not too long after his arrival, that he wanted to have brown bag lunches with us so that we could brainstorm and he could pick our brains or something. When our day at IO/UNP came, all of us trooped over to his conference room and we pulled out our brown bags and he told us all about his philosophy and everything for about ten minutes and then he said he would be happy to answer any questions we had. Somebody actually had a question and brought it up, and he then talked for the next hour. We listened; nobody interrupted him and then he looked at his watch and said, “Well, I guess we better all get back to work. Thank you so much for coming. This has been very useful. I have learned a lot.” I looked at the guy next to me and I said, “Well, he did all the talking. No wonder he thinks he learned something.” We all filed out.

Now a different side of that whole dynamic was at another point we were all summoned by the deputy assistant secretary working for him.

Q: This was the guy listening in?

WEINLAND: No, the guy listening in was the acting office director.

The deputy assistant secretary was an ambitious man who wanted to get an ambassadorship out of it. He called us all together and essentially the purpose of that meeting was to say to us something along the lines of, “I know it's really hard to work for Alan Keyes and we all have these problems working for Alan Keyes, but you can come to me and we can work around it” or something like this. I was sitting there thinking, “I don't

think it is exactly appropriate for a deputy assistant secretary to be saying this to desk officers about the person to whom he, theoretically, is reporting. It was not a bureau that was very functional in the sense of people having a lot of team spirit.

Q: So how long did you last there?

WEINLAND: I only lasted about, well, of course I arrived in February but I didn't really take hold until maybe late March or April and I probably left in early September. Well, it would have been the end of September.

I was the person who was supposed to arrange the secretary's trip to the UN and so I know I stayed through the time the General Assembly opened. Just to give you some flavor of it, the president was also going to the UN, and so there were various meetings over at the White House to plot out the president's trip to the UN. The ambitious deputy assistant secretary decided this was another way for him to get good visibility among people who might be able to do something for him in the future, so he accompanied me as my babysitter to all the White House meetings, which I didn't find very helpful or useful. Anyway, I had to put up with it because I had to put up with it.

He was one of these people who never read his in-box until something hit the newspapers. So you'd send him a memo and say that something's brewing; we should head it off at the pass, this is what I suggest we do, and he wouldn't see it until four days later. Elaine Sciolino, who was the New York Times correspondent at the UN at that point, would have it on the front page and you would say, “Well, my memo is in your in-box.” We have all worked for people like this.

My real issues were with the DAS rather than with Alan Keyes, except for that one final fight. I mean, I was low enough down the pecking order that I could just ignore Alan Keyes but I had to go through the deputy assistant secretary. He did something toward the end that just made me furious. He schmoozed with the staff assistant to the deputy secretary about this whole UN General Assembly attendance, and promised the assistant that IO/

UNP would make up a guest list for the deputy secretary to invite to a luncheon. About a week after the DAS and the staff assistant had their chat over lunch, I got a phone call from the staff person saying, “We are waiting to get the guest list for Mr. So and So's luncheon.” I said, “What luncheon?” I had never been told that I had a job to assemble this guest list. Of course, it was my job, but no one had said to me, “I just had lunch with So and So. He wants a guest list of 12 people.” You know, it was just the complete of lack of anybody being in charge of anything that was absolutely impossible.

I think that that DAS was trying to ingratiate himself with the seventh floor against Keyes because none of the top management wanted Keyes in the building. So he was trying to work around Keyes to get Keyes out. The trouble was he wasn't in real control of anything that was going on.

Q: What sort of career did this DAS have?

WEINLAND: I do not believe he was ever made an ambassador. I was one of four people to curtail out of that office within a year.

Q: Did you have problems getting out of there?

WEINLAND: Yes, I did.

Q: What did you do? How did you

WEINLAND: I went to my CDO.

Q: That's a career development officer.

WEINLAND: Right. He knew the personalities; he had worked for the guy who was the acting desk officer who was an absolute wipe out and he'd worked for the DAS. The CDO was a personal friend of mine; we were in the same Foreign Service class. He said, “We

have to get you out of there and we have to do it before they are required to write you an OER, so it has to be fast."

So I wrote up a memo of all the things that I felt had not been done right and that were signs of bad management and concluded, "I can't work in this atmosphere for people who do not trust me to do my job."

Then I was sent to see somebody in the Office of the Director General (DG). I tend to be very emotional when I am talking about something that's either making me very angry or very happy, excited, or whatever. Of course, I was very teary during the interview, and I said, "I need to get out of there. Here's the memo, here's all the things that happened."

I had the feeling from the get-go the DG people wanted to use me to get at Keyes and not at the DAS, so they weren't all that impressed with my evidence against the DAS. The assistant director general with whom I met said to me that he would consider approving my curtailment if I would go and have a consult with the psychiatrist in the medical division. This is why I am cynical when people say to me that there is no such thing as discrimination against women in the State Department; I can assure you that no male officer would have been sent to the psychiatrist.

Q: I can assure you of that too.

WEINLAND: I was appalled but it was clearly the only way I could win my point. I wasn't going to say to this ambassador level man, "You're being a sexist and I'm going to grieve and I'm going to get AFSA (the American Foreign Service Association, the union in the State Department) after you." I mean, I couldn't, so I went to see the psychiatrist. The medical problem that I had had that had curtailed me out of Kigali was a serious problem with my liver, probably caused by the anti-malarial prophylaxis that we were advised to take. It had cirrhosed my liver. They diagnosed it first as hepatitis that had caused this. It's called toxic hepatitis.

So he said to me, “Oh, you know, you've had hepatitis. No wonder you are so emotional.” I said, “That has nothing whatsoever to do with what I am talking about.” “Oh, I can understand. I had hepatitis” and blah, blah, blah. Then he turned to me, and he said, “What do you really want out of this?” I said, “I want this person to be counseled on his management behavior, that he should stop shouting at people who don't do exactly what he wants and listen to them explain.” That was another thing he did; if you hadn't done exactly what he told you to, he would shout at you before you said, “I could not do that because this was a better thing to do” or “I didn't have the right data and I had to wait until I did” or you know, whatever. He just looked at me and he just said, “Helen, you know that's not going to happen.” He said, “I will approve your getting curtailed because I know you are still all emotionally screwed with the hepatitis. This will be totally confidential.” That was the only basis on which I went to this guy.

So I went back to my office and was working and a day or two later the DAS came in and said, “Can we go down for a cup of coffee?” So we went down to the cafeteria and he said to me, “I had no idea that your health was as bad as it is.” And I said, “And how do you know about my health?” I mean, obviously, the DG's office had told him what the shrink had reported and I said, “That has nothing whatsoever to do with you.” “Well, isn't there anything we can do to keep you from leaving our office?” I said, “No. I'm sorry. I'm gone. I'm not interested in negotiating this anymore.”

So I curtailed and I left. As I said, I was the first of four to do the same thing, so that is proof to me, even more proof that my hepatitis and my emotional behavior had nothing whatsoever to do with my inability to work there. The others were all men. They could see they weren't going to get anywhere working in that zoo so they got out as well.

Q: Well, I have talked to a number of people who talked about the Keyes' regime and it is not one that is looked back upon with nostalgia.

WEINLAND: It was a disaster and it followed on a period when that was a very desirable bureau to work in. There had been a wonderful director and deputy director of the desk when I first went in to talk to them about the job, which actually served me well later because the deputy director put in a word for me to get the job I got in Berlin.

You know, when you have a guy at the top who cannot command respect at any level and you have a deputy working for him who is undercutting him at every inch, you have a very unhappy group of people. As I say, Alan Keyes didn't last too much longer himself. He went toe to toe with Whitehead, the deputy secretary and then went to the Washington Times to complain. That was the end of Alan Keyes in the State Department.

Q: He has floated around but never gotten anywhere.

WEINLAND: No, and he doesn't even these days run as president on his international experience; he runs on family values issues.

Q: Where did you go?

WEINLAND: Well, again I was in a position of having to find a job in the off bidding season and so I was offered a job in INR, on the Africa desk of INR. It sounded interesting. They said they wanted me to come in to work on some special projects, and I went and started reading in. I kept saying, “What special project do you want me to work on? Give me some assignments.” They all sort of just dissolved into nothing so unfortunately, it was a year when I didn't have much substantive work. They were very nice people and I liked working there, it was a pretty happy office after the horrors of the previous year, so I just sort of floated around and did this and that. But it didn't get me an OER that did much for me.

Q: OER is an Officer Efficiency Report.

WEINLAND: And so I was finally in a bidding cycle, I was back on the regular bidding cycle and I applied for a job on the Zimbabwe desk. I still couldn't get a medical clearance to go back overseas.

Q: And so you were on the Zimbabwe desk from when to when?

WEINLAND: From summer of '87 to the summer of '89.

Q: What was the situation in Zimbabwe at the time?

WEINLAND: We were still pretty friendly with Robert Mugabe. We were supporting his government, trying to build up our trade and our USAID operations and all this kind of activity there. There were straws in the wind pointing to the future, but as is very often the case, they didn't appear to us to be serious ones.

Q: Could you give any examples?

WEINLAND: There was a man who had been in the freedom movement under Robert Mugabe named Sithole. He had requested asylum in the United States, or he had come to the United States and stayed here and he was applying for asylum or else for permanent residence and we were saying he did not have any basis of fear of persecution should he return. In all of this back and forth, we were reciting all this documentation of the fact that the people who were in the opposition political party were not persecuted and so on and so forth. There was still a second political party in Zimbabwe at the time and Sithole was active in that party. I don't remember if he ever actually did go back. I think he did and I think at least for a while he went back unmolested.

Mugabe won the election in 1980, that was when I was in Nigeria, I remember the Nigerians were very happy and excited about that. So he had been in office seven to eight years, was still considered by many Zimbabweans to be the man who was the father of his country, he had brought them independence, the country was doing well economically.

They still had a very strong, largely white, commercial farming sector in their economy that was earning a lot of foreign exchange. They had a tourist industry that was doing better and better all the time. All these were initiatives we were supporting.

We had a political ambassador there who was actually was one who was very good, was an experienced manager, ran an effective embassy with I think pretty upbeat morale and was solid on the issues, knew how to go to talk to Mugabe.

I will talk about two or three issues that came up during the time I was on the desk.

One had to do with the fact there was something in the State Department authorization legislation the year I arrived called the Pressler Amendment, introduced by Senator Larry Pressler, that said that no country that condoned “necklacing” could receive U.S. assistance. “Necklacing” was this business of putting a tire around somebody's body and then filling it with gasoline., and setting it on fire; it was a brutal form of assassination.

Q: They did it in Haiti and in a couple of countries in Africa.

WEINLAND: Yes, and, they did it a lot in South Africa. Under the Pressler Amendment, we were therefore required, as desk officers, to instruct our ambassadors to go in and get the assurance of whatever head of state that they were talking to that they did not condone necklacing. Most of the ambassadors went in and said, “Look, just tell me your country doesn't condone necklacing.” And the president would say, “No, we don't condone necklacing” and that would be the end of it.

In Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, being Robert Mugabe, said, “How dare you ask such a question? Be gone, be gone. I will not deign to answer such a question.” So the poor ambassador couldn't get him to answer the question. I think we must have spent about three or four months thinking up every kind of formula to get him to say it without saying it. Ultimately, there was some kind of formulation that where we could put together two different statements in some way that it met the requirement. It was not easy.

Q: Such is diplomacy.

WEINLAND: Such is diplomacy. You got a little to gain; we got a little to gain. We finally got it done but it was pretty dreadful. That was one.

Another was even worse; I think this next one went on for about six months. It had to do with a diplomat who was assigned to the United Nations in a fairly mid-ranking role, first secretary at their UN mission, who lived somewhere in Queens I think. His son went to school in Queens and claimed to his teacher that he had been beaten by his father and strung up by the wrists to some pipes in the basement of their house. He apparently showed some marks on his body. By then all these regulations had started to come into effect, whereby if the school heard such a story, they immediately sent the social services around.

The social services and the police arrived on the doorstep of the UN diplomat and took all three of his children into custody before anyone from the UN could say, “You can't do that, they have diplomatic immunity.” So we now had three small, Zimbabwean children in the custody of social services of the city of New York and an enraged Zimbabwean mission to the UN, a president of Zimbabwe who was beside himself. We kept trying to say to the police “You can't do this,” and they said they had to, not the police but the social services. “You cannot hold these children. Their father is a Zimbabwean diplomat.”

It was unbelievable. They did return the two children who did not claim to be abused relatively quickly, like within three or four days, but they placed this young boy, who was the oldest of the children, in some sort of foster arrangement, whether it was an institutional foster arrangement or an actual separate family I can't remember. Of course, the newspapers got hold of the thing, so it was all over the press and it was an incredible mess.

I can remember having a phone conversation of about 20 or 30 minutes with Charles Rangel whose district it was in.

Q: Congressman Rangel.

WEINLAND: I don't think I said it but I almost said it: what future does this child have as a foster child, as a black, foster child in New York City as compared with being in his own country as a free citizen? I didn't say that obviously, but that's what I was thinking.

By this time we had an NGO, a children's protection society in Zimbabwe, that was brought into the act and they gave all kinds of assurances that they would supervise the family if the boy were returned to Zimbabwe. We had PNGed (declared persona non grata) the father, so he was gone and I think also the rest of the family, so only this child was in the United States, all on his own. The child protective society said we will supervise the situation here. If the child returns to Zimbabwe, we will keep an eye on it.

We kept going to Congress and to all the authorities, the social services' authorities, trying to get them to agree that the child should be accompanied back to Zimbabwe and allowed to rejoin his family.

Ultimately, we did prevail but as I say, it was about six months of incredible struggle over this kid. I don't know, I assume he had been beaten by his father. Whether the child protective people back in Zimbabwe were able to make sure it didn't happen again, I do not know. We stopped keeping track of it after a while. One can only hope that the kid did OK.

I personally believed, and I still believe, we were doing the right thing because I did not think the child had anything like a decent future in the United States under those circumstances. Weighing the two options, I felt it was better for him to go back to Zimbabwe.

We had to bring former Congressman Andy Young to get involved in it, talking to somebody. I think maybe he had to call Mugabe personally, I can't remember exactly what he did. It just went on and on and on. But finally the child did go home.

So that was another big thing that we did.

During the time I was on the desk, Mugabe got some sort of international prize for developing agriculture in his country and came to the States to receive the prize. The good side of that particular visit was he brought a whole bunch of people with him in the entourage and among them the heads of the three different farmers' organizations in Zimbabwe and I had a delightful weekend running them around upstate New York visiting all a group of different farms and going to Niagara Falls. We had a good time. It is horribly ironic to look back of course, and realize that Robert Mugabe has destroyed the agricultural sector of his country with his ruinous policies.

Mugabe came to New York another time, to address the UN General Assembly I believe, and I went to New York as notetaker with some State Department folks who met with him. So he's one of two people whose hands I have shaken that I do not look back on with any pleasure, the other being Mobutu (former dictatorial ruler of Zaire).

Q: Was anybody looking at Mugabe and saying, “Oh, my God. This is going to be a disaster?”

WEINLAND: Not at that point.

First of all, he's very old now. I think one of the things that sent him over the edge was the death of his first wife. I think was quite devoted to her and she had some kind of kidney ailment, I think, and she ultimately died, I believe in the early '90s, of kidney failure. He remarried and I think the second wife has been one of these African madames, working behind the scenes, very grasping, with a big family that's all out for what they can milk out

of the place. I don't think that was so true of his first wife and I think the second wife has been a malignant influence on him.

When that war in the Congo happened and the Zimbabweans were involved, this would have been in the late '90s or the early 2000s, the Zimbabweans got into that whole struggle on the side of the Congo government, not on the side of the rebels who were up toward Rwanda and Uganda. I think a lot of what was behind the decision to go into that war was the sons of this woman who wanted to get hold of mineral contracts and rape the country. I think I have read newspaper accounts that that was one of the things that was going on in that whole business. They didn't stay in the fight very long, as I recall. The Angolans were in on it, the Zimbabweans, everybody sort of jumped in.

Q: So you left that desk. Were you looking to serve in Zimbabwe?

WEINLAND: No, I went out to bid and looked around at what was available. I decided I would like to go back to Europe and I bid on a job that was coming open at the Berlin mission, the U.S. military mission in West Berlin. We weren't allowed to call it West Berlin but I wasn't at the embassy in East Berlin, I was on the western side.

Q: So you went to Berlin?

WEINLAND: In the summer of '89.

Q: That was a good time to go.

WEINLAND: Yes. The border between Hungary and Austria had just opened up and everybody was saying, “Oh, Helen. You're going to go and bring down the Berlin Wall” and “Ha, ha” and I said, “Oh, never, never, never. East Germany is a totally different animal from Hungary.”

Q: Your job was what?

WEINLAND: I was what was called the Senat Liaison Officer (SLO). We still maintained a military occupation and we were the mission in the American sector. There were also the British sector and the French sector, and each of the three Western powers that had missions in the western part of Berlin had officers with similar titles, so we met in triads. My French colleague and my British colleague and I all met as the Senat liaison officers. We all had offices in Sch#neberg city hall and we met once a week, first among ourselves and then with the man in the Berlin government with whom we liaised. All through the mission there were similar things; there were legal advisers, French, British, American legal advisers, each mission had somebody who coordinated with the Soviets in their sector, and so on and so forth.

Our job as SLOs was to be the point officers for issues between our missions, united in a sense, and the government of the city of Berlin. Of course, we had never recognized the division of the city, so in our view the mayor was the governing mayor of Berlin. We met with somebody on his staff every week as well as a civil servant in the city administration.

We also attended all the meetings of the house of representatives of Berlin, a legislative assembly. Berlin was not part of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG); it was in Germany but it was not legally a part of the FRG, and therefore, any legislation that was passed in Berlin had to be vetted by our legal advisers, who all took a very close look at legislation that was passed in the Federal Republic and decided whether or not it could be what was called “taken over” into Berlin as valid legislation within Berlin. There were occasions where we would say, “Well, here is a piece of legislation but we control all the air space over Berlin. You have no authority whatsoever over the air space over Berlin. That's an allied prerogative.”

If it were legislation about barge canal traffic and stuff like that, we had certain exceptions we made for how barges could move on the canals.

Berlin was a demilitarized city so anything that smacked of anything military in Berlin we would nix. I think it was true we couldn't even, that nobody from the Federal Republic could visit Berlin in a German FRG uniform. If they came, they had to come as civilians.

It all seemed so antiquated by 1989 but we still all had to live by all these odd conventions because we had never signed a treaty to end the war.

Q: So you were there from the summer of '89 until when?

WEINLAND: Until the spring of '91.

I arrived in July of 1989. At that point it looked as though things were going to go on as they had been. I went around and I did my protocol visits with all the members of the Senat, which was actually the city executive body, it wasn't a legislative body. I went and called on various other people I had to deal with. Each month the chairmanship of the three allies changed hands, so in August our mission became the chairman mission of the three. Because we were waiting still for a new political counselor, or whatever his title was in Berlin, I was acting political counselor. So I actually had two different things I was the chair of in these triads which was a little nerve-wracking since I had been there all of a week or so. Anyway, we muddled through and I got good advice and people helped out.

In October the East German government (German Democratic Republic or DDR) celebrated its 40th anniversary. Opposition to that regime had been building steadily ever since the Hungarian border had opened. East Germans were free to travel to Czechoslovakia still, whose border with the west was still closed, and there was a large number of people who had jumped over the fence behind West German Embassy in Prague. I think at one time there were up to 3,000 people camped out in the embassy garden waiting disposition of what was going to happen to them, refusing to leave. Finally a deal was worked out, whereby they could be put on a train that would go back through Berlin or East Germany and then on to West Germany. That was really only a band-aid

kind of solution, of course, because 3,000 more could jump over the fence at any time. They wanted to clear that problem up before this big anniversary celebration. There was beginning to be some internal opposition building up in East Germany itself, which was stronger in Leipzig than in Berlin.

Q: This is the Leipzig candlelight marches?

WEINLAND: Yes, outside the big church in the center of town. There was much less of it in Berlin. There was a little bit in Berlin but much more in Leipzig. So that was going on and the authorities of the GDR were trying to figure what to do about that.

I wasn't reporting from East Berlin so I can't tell you all the ins and outs but it was clear that this was getting to be a real volcano simmering under the surface. I understand what happened was that they had invited Gorbachev, of course, to come and be part of the 40th anniversary. I believe the East German officials, including President Honecker, who was by then practically dead, the guy looked like a cadaver, said to Gorbachev, “We need your help. This is getting out of hand.” And Gorbachev said, “Not it; it's your problem.” The Soviets could not hold out against what was going on everywhere. Poland was beginning to rumble, Czechoslovakia was getting a little restive and so on, but the GDR managed to carry off the 40th anniversary.

Not too long after that, Honecker stepped down and they brought in a somewhat younger guy, but still a communist, by the name of Modrow. There began to be much more active opposition. You know, it's like any situation of this kind when you make some kind of concession, you change your policy a little bit, and you think you are going to then be able to hold the new line. You never can, unless you are willing to use extreme force, which clearly they were not going to do, so that simply emboldened more and more oppositional activity in Leipzig. Then it began to spread to Berlin.

It was clear one of the biggest, most common demands was that people be free to travel, that they just felt that they were in a prison and they wanted to be able to go to the West to visit, to visit relatives, to study maybe, whatever, to shop.

The pressure was really, really building. First they called a meeting of some party organization and the decision was to fiddle a little bit with the travel restrictions; the public reaction was, essentially, “It's not enough.” The pressure continued to build all through October and so the government called a meeting of the Central Committee, which, I think, was about 200 people. So they had a two-day meeting of the Central Committee, November 8 and 9.

At the end of it, Schabowski, who was the Central Committee member from Berlin, came out to give a press conference. Of course, there were press people from the West as well from the Eastern bloc. I watched him on TV. I got home from work that night and turned on the TV and I watched him. He was reading from a piece of paper the decisions of the Central Committee, stating that citizens of the DDR would be allowed to travel freely to the West and they would not be required to have any special passports or anything.

Then somebody asked him a follow-up question and said, “When do these regulations go into effect?” He had no answer. We would never send anybody out in the State Department without a briefing book saying if you are asked this question, this is what you answer, but he didn't have an answer. He looked up and this sort of scared rabbit look in his eyes and he said, “Well, I guess from right now.”

I was sitting there, I was in a bathrobe, sort of lounging in front of the TV and I thought, “What? Should I clean out my ears? What did I just hear?”

Then they cut to the studio where they had the governing mayor, Walter Momper, and he was like a kid on Christmas night, just white with excitement. I thought, “I really did hear that.”

I rushed to the phone and called up the man who was the mission duty officer, who happened to be another political officer in my section. I said, “John, I don't know if you have been listening to the news and know what's happening.” He said, “Oh, you mean that Soviet plane that strayed into allied air space?” (That was something we fairly often had to handle when we were duty officers). I said, “No. No. They have just opened the Berlin Wall.” He said, “What?” “Yes. I think somebody needs to call Checkpoint Charlie.” I think the army probably already had word of it. They must have been already figuring out what to do but when you watch what happened later that evening on the TV, this whole group of people arrived at Checkpoint Charlie and said, “They just announced we can all go to the West.” So maybe 250, maybe 300 people standing there yelling, “We want to go to the West. They have just told us we have permission to go to the West.” And there are maybe ten guards guarding the gate. They did a rapid calculation and said, “Pass.”

And that's how the Berlin Wall opened up. Nobody knew it was going to happen. Berlin authorities didn't know, the East Germans didn't really know, we didn't know, nobody knew.

Q: OK, let's take it and move over to your place. What did you all do in our mission? Was a meeting called to discuss what the hell do we do now?

WEINLAND: The next day was a Friday, and it was the holiday before Veterans' Day. Veterans' Day was on Saturday so this was the 10th of November, and it was an American holiday, but of course, we all had to work. We were sending “situation reports” (sitreps) every hour or two, what the Berlin authorities were telling our minister and what the minister was telling the Berlin authorities, what the security people were finding out from the security people in the Berlin government and so on.

Q: But all this time an avalanche of people was coming in?

WEINLAND: All over the city, everywhere.

Q: So you are talking about something which nobody had any control over, it was just happening.

WEINLAND: One of our standard procedures had been that every time there had been contacts between the Berlin city government and the government on the other side of the Wall, with their counterparts, such meetings were all very carefully prepared. Weeks of effort went into writing papers and memoranda, and it was all vetted by all the allies and carefully orchestrated.

I don't know if you have interviewed Harry Gilmore who was our minister. The governing mayor, Momper, was obviously talking to Harry all the time in the first few days and also to the British and French ministers. Momper's message was, “We can't wait a minute. We've got to get our security people together with the security people from East Berlin. We've got thousands of people flooding around, half of them are drunk, the Volkspolizei (VoPos, East German police) don't have any real orders what to do. We've got to get the security people coordinating and we've got to open up some more crossing points in the Wall” because there were only about two or three official crossing points prior to November 9.

There was no way we could say, “No. You can't go talk to your East Berlin counterparts.” Obviously, we had to approve that.

At this point I was sent off to the House of Representatives at city hall, where I had my office. A special session of the House of Representatives had been convened. I was sent out to cover what was going on there. Of course, we had no cell phones, no walkie talkies, in those days. There I was, running back to my office to call back to mission headquarters, so I was running all over the place, reporting on what was being discussed in the House of Representatives. Every hour they wanted a briefing from the city hall about what was going on to wrap into these sitreps.

It was clear by the middle of the day that there would be a big demonstration in that plaza in front of Sch#neberg city hall that night. People like Willie Brandt, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who was then the foreign minister of West Germany, the governing mayor, the president of the House of Representatives, all sorts of notables were going to speak to the crowd.

With my British counterpart (I don't recall that our French colleague was with us at that time) John Freeman and his wife, who was German born, the three of us all stood at the back of the enormous crowd that pretty much filled that entire, large plaza and listened to the speeches, which were, of course, highly emotional. You kno“I never thought I would live to see the day” kinds of speeches. The mood in the crowd was just absolutely euphoric, absolutely euphoric. And everyone there knew that Berlin was the center of the day's event, that the opening of the Wall concentrated the entire world's attention on Berlin.

Sometime during that first week or so, I remember saying to the senior of the FSNs who worked for me, a good friend and more or less my age, “You know, Erika. This isn't going to be easy. There are all kinds of problems ahead, and this isn't going to be easy.” She said, “Let us just enjoy this. We will get to the hard part later.” I said, “Fair enough.”

Q: Was there concern that there might be second thoughts on the part of the East Germans, that they might try to shut the Wall down again?

WEINLAND: I don't think so. I don't think they could have.

Q: Well, but things had gone so far that it just wasn't going to happen?

WEINLAND: I don't recall that anybody ever said that that might be a possibility. I think there was some fear for a couple of days that some of the VoPos on the other side or even army people, if they brought them in, might fire on people, that there could be a violent

incident. That was why the police on both sides really wanted to talk to each other at the highest level to make sure nothing bad happened.

Q: Were the police talking?

WEINLAND: It was so bizarre. I mean there was just no way that this thing was not going to go forward, as far as I can judge from my memory of it and even understood at the time. First of all, the genie was out of the bottle in Poland and Hungary by this time. Gorbachev was well installed in the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union wasn't going to help any of these guys out. How could you put the cork back in the bottle if you didn't have an army that was fully behind the idea of smashing it down?

Q: What was happening in Czechoslovakia?

WEINLAND: This would have been the 10th of November and of course, there was continuing boiling around under the surface in Czechoslovakia but the Velvet Revolution, so called, didn't really occur until the end of that month in November.

Q: This was the guy with the keys.

WEINLAND: Late November. Yes, the keys, the vigil, all that came later than the opening of the Wall, but again, had its own momentum. I am an historian by training. I really believe in the revolution of rising expectations and when you say to somebody, “You can go to the West”, you know, then the next thing he is going to say is, “Well, why can't I go and live there and earn my living there?” It was an irresistible thing.

The mission headquarters and the Sch#neberg City Hall were a long way away from the actual Wall so I didn't even get up there until Sunday.

Q: What was happening along the border between East and West Germany, not Berlin? Was there anything happening there?

WEINLAND: Oh, yes. I think all the fences were coming down. People were moving back and forth across that border as well. I can't remember what sequence and how quickly it happened, but I am pretty sure when the Wall opened, and they said citizens of the DDR could travel, they didn't have to go through Berlin to travel. They could just walk across into Hanover or other crossing points along the border between the two Germanies.

I am trying to think of what else happened that weekend, when it first happened.

Of course they also opened the border on the other side, the west side of Berlin, where the Glienicke Bridge leads into Potsdam — you know, The Spy Who Came in from the Cold, and the other movies that had the spy exchanges across that border. That was opened the same weekend. I remember going out there either Friday or Saturday night and standing and watching people moving back and forth across that bridge.

Sunday I went up to see the Wall for myself. They had just opened a new crossing point that's in what is now Potsdamer Platz, and there was a constant stream of traffic in both directions — people coming over and people returning with sacks of bananas and other things that were unavailable in the east. In fact, a lot of the grocery stores were giving things away. There was a Burger King stand giving away free hamburgers. That opening was in the British sector so the British were handing out tea from a little army canteen. West Berliners were standing there with flowers, handing a flower to everybody coming through. And then there were these little cars, these Trabants. You could hear them putt, putt, putting all around town, pouring out a noxious cloud of fumes.

One Trabant actually stopped. I was with the legal adviser from our mission. The people in the car stopped us and said, “We don't know how to get back home. Where can we get back through the Wall?” They had maps, but only of East Berlin. They didn't have any West Berlin streets on their maps and they couldn't figure out where the opening might be, so we had to tell them how to get home. It was an absolutely insane period.

I'll say this one thing and then we can go into the details of it in another session, maybe.

We had the embassy in East Berlin, we had the mission in West Berlin and we had the embassy in Bonn, three American establishments, all of which were pretty big. Of the three, we at the mission in West Berlin were the only ones who said, “Germany is uniting and it's uniting as we are standing here.” The embassy in East Germany continued to believe for quite a long time that there was a so-called third way, that somehow the Communist government would morph into a vaguely Christian Democratic or Social Democratic looking entity and it would survive as a separate country.

The embassy in Bonn was listening to German Chancellor Kohl, who was saying, “Well, yes, we'll unify, but we will take ten years to do it” and so that was what the reporting from Bonn was saying. Germany will ultimately be one country again, but it will be a long, guided, carefully controlled, developmental process. We in Berlin were the ones that said, “Get ready, guys. This train is coming down the track fast.” We pride ourselves, those of us who were there, we pride ourselves in saying we called it right.

Q: Where did you go from Berlin?

WEINLAND: Kaduna.

Break between sessions.

Q: We are talking about the morning after in Berlin, the Wall has fallen, people are flowing back and forth. Was this sort of, what is going to happen here, because at the time it was not at all clear that Germany, the Germanys would be unified. Could you describe that kind of limbo that things were in right at the beginning? You know, from the perspective of you all in Berlin.

WEINLAND: Obviously, the first few days we didn't know what was going to be happening, but it began to be very clear, particularly within Berlin, it would not be possible to have

two cities where there was really one, once the police were not tasked with keeping it separate. There were all kinds of issues that, once the Wall was open, had to be addressed, like the intercity transportation system, the security system with the police, fire companies and hospitals, and all these kinds of things. Once you had no Wall, there was no rationale for keeping these as separate systems governed by two different countries.

You also have to remember that Berlin was entirely within East Germany; there was no border in Berlin with the Federal Republic of Germany so that if you did not unite the city and the country, you would have this very strange anomaly of a slice of pie that wasn't really governed by either of the two countries.

It fairly quickly became apparent to us at the mission in west Berlin that this was not going to be a workable situation. At the same time, the chancellor, Helmut Kohl, in the Federal Republic of Germany, was pressing, was saying “Well, we're going to take this very slowly and we'll establish some ties and we'll do a little bit here and a little bit there and our business people will start investing some money.” They were looking at the years. Our ambassador in Bonn,

Q: Vernon Walters.

WEINLAND: yes, Vernon Walters and he was, of course, talking often with Kohl and the other members of the government and he subscribed to that theory. There was a little bit of tension between us and the embassy, which nominally was in charge.

Internally, within the embassy, there was also a question that became more and more pressing as things went on, which was what the configuration of the American presence in Germany would be, because you can't maintain two very large diplomatic missions within the same city as any rational way of using your resources. That was also a question that was hanging out there after we began to assess what was going on.

Q: Knowing bureaucracies, and how bureaucratic the Germans can be, I can see this must have been wrenching to them. It must have been difficult for them, and for you as well, to rethink all the bureaucratic arrangements that had grown up over the years.

WEINLAND: Well, the trouble was there were all these regulations on us as members of the military mission: where we could travel, which checkpoints we could or could not cross. We had to follow the rules that had existed, even after they didn't make any sense. And so we would say, “Well why can't we go over the Bornholmer Strasse crossing point? It's closer to where we live than Checkpoint Charlie.” All these kinds of questions about outdated rules, “Why can't we take the S-Bahn over to Unter den Linden?” and all kinds of odd things began to come up and they just got worse as time went on.

My job was to be the working level person who liaised with the Berlin government. The Berlin government, in the eyes of the Western allies, the British, the French and the Americans, was the legitimate government for the entire city of Berlin. It had left the traditional city hall, which was in the Soviet sector and therefore in East Berlin, on the other side of the Wall in 1948, when there had been such violent demonstrations and other pressures on them that they could no longer function. That is when they had moved into the city hall of one of the 12 districts in the western part of the city, in the American sector, in Sch#neberg. Of course, after the Wall opened, all the people in the Berlin government were saying, “How do we interface with the people who are in the Berlin government in East Berlin? Where is the real legitimate government here? How are we going to function? It is not acceptable that we would just split the city in half and they'd carry on over there and we'd carry on over here.”

So there were legal problems that were pretty thorny and also these practical problems of public security and public services.

I will add one small note that was of interest to me because I was always interested in religious arrangements in the countries I served in. That was that the Catholic diocese had

never acknowledged the splitting of the city. The Catholic cathedral was also in the eastern Soviet sector, and there had been a very special dispensation that permitted the bishop occasionally to come to the West to visit the rest of his diocese. That was another example of the kinds of institutional anomalies that the splitting of the city had brought about.

So we were wrestling with all these issues. I have to say, I can no longer, 20 years later, really recover the chronology of how things changed. The Wall opened on the night of November 9th. Gradually, more openings were made in the Wall so that it was easier for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic to move across from one side of the city to the other. One of the strange anomalies was that while East Berliners were able to come to the West part of the city, there were still certain restrictions on the West Berliners and on West Germans from the Federal Republic of Germany traveling into the East. That took maybe two or three months to resolve.

In March of 1990, I had an American citizen friend visiting me. (I have to say, I accumulated many, many close friends during this time because everybody in the world wanted to come and see what was going on in Berlin. I had a steady stream of house guests.) Just to give you some idea of the anomalies, a visitor came toward the end of March and he and I and my senior assistant, a citizen of the Federal Republic and also a West Berliner, wanted to go have a picnic at a lake in East Berlin. We went to one of the crossing points that I only recently had been given permission to use.

In the traditional way that members of the U.S. military mission went from the West to the East, we were not permitted to have any contact whatsoever, even spoken contact, with the VoPos in East Berlin who controlled that side of the crossing point. All we could do was take our military ID card and hold it up to the window of the car, which had to be closed.

My American friend, of course, was traveling on an American passport; he was not an American working for the government, so he had a passport, and my German assistant had a German ID card. She had to get out of the car and walk to the other side of the

border because she was not allowed to cross in a military mission vehicle; my vehicle had military mission plates. She had to walk over. The American friend presented his passport and was able to hand it out physically to the VoPo and get it back, but I still had to do the military mission thing of putting my pass up to the window. This was the kind of weird combination of procedures that existed for some time after the Wall opened.

Q: What had happened? I mean, there were East German guards at these openings?

WEINLAND: There were still guards, yes.

Q: They just waved all the citizens through?

WEINLAND: Yes. They would just wave you through.

Q: But you all had to go through?

WEINLAND: Yes, my assistant still had to present ID in order to cross that crossing point. Previously, she would not have been allowed to cross it at all without a huge amount of paperwork and applying for a visas and all that kind of rigamarole, so this was something of an improvement but not a huge one.

Q: Were the police, the VoPos, were they still carrying Kalashnikovs?

WEINLAND: I can't remember, but probably not.

Q: I would have thought it would have been a much more relaxed sort of thing.

WEINLAND: Yes, but still we were under all these restrictions. I can remember having friends visiting me in January. We went up to the part of the Wall that is right behind the Reichstagsgebaeude, the former parliament building. There was an opening that had been carved out by what we called the “wall peckers”, the people with the chisels and hammers.

He started to walk through and I said, “I can't go through that. I have to go through an officially recognized crossing point.”

I had two friends who came sometime in say late June or early July, and we wanted to visit Potsdam where there are these wonderful palaces of Frederick the Great. With the first set of visitors, we had to stop at Checkpoint Bravo, the checkpoint between West Berlin and East Germany on the western side of the city. We had to stop at a shed there for them to get visas for all their family. I still used my military pass, although I did not have to have a visa as had been the case prior to November 1989.

About two weeks later I had another American visitor. We wanted to do more or less the same thing, and I said, “We have to stop here to get you a visa,” so we stopped at the shed. No one was there. It was locked, it was closed. I said, “Well, I guess we just keep going.”

Q: It sounds like, having served in Germany, you and the mission had really caught the German infection of bureaucracy. Leaving the decks of the Titanic, and there is a German man there, first checking off and turning your deck chair in and all this before getting on a lifeboat.

WEINLAND: It felt that way, yes.

To back up, where all this had come from was what we called it the “Berlin theology.” It had developed when it was clear the city was dividing into an eastern, Soviet sector and the three western sectors, something that happened gradually in the 1940s. There had never been a treaty ending the war or even until 1972, I believe it was, a treaty more or less regularizing the relationships between the four different allies of the war. In order to preserve our status and our right to operate in Berlin, these procedures had become crucially important during and after the Berlin Airlift in '48-49. This was why all these little technicalities had grown up; why we were not allowed to speak to the VoPos, because in our theology, they had no right to control that border. In our view, that was a Soviet

responsibility, and we kept saying to the Soviets, “What happens in this sector is your problem, not the problem of the German Democratic Republic.

Q: All of this very important because there was a fear of salami tactics, cutting away the rights of access. The Soviets were playing the same game. They were trying to get us to concede certain things so that eventually the western allies would leave.

WEINLAND: The Berliners who had lived there through the war and after knew that what we were doing was preserving their freedom. Younger people who moved up there when it became attractive to do so, because the rents were low and there was no draft in Berlin because it was a demilitarized city, and they could get cheap lofts if they were artists or musicians or didn't have a lot of money and so on, found it an attractive place to live and they got big tax breaks for doing so. They were less enamored of some of these regulations, but for the older population, they realized that the rules were important.

We thought they were silly, too, but you know, but we also accepted that they represented important precedents that had to be maintained. When I drove from West Berlin to the Federal Republic of Germany, most westerners could use one of three routes; we were restricted to one route that went straight across in the center. We had to check in with the military at Checkpoint Bravo as we left the city and entered the German Democratic Republic. We went through a special lane that was controlled by the Soviets while everybody else went through regular customs border kinds of lanes, controlled by the East Germans.

The U.S. Military Police man who was checking me out said, “Return all salutes,” and I said, “I'm not a military member of the mission. I am civilian.” They never have any sense of humor. He said, “Return all salutes.” And I said, “OK, OK.” By gum, those Russians were there, snapping their hands up to their caps and I, in my blue jeans and T shirt, saluted right back.

It was important to maintain that, but after November 1989 all was now all in a terrible state of uncertainty and flux for the next eight months or so.

Q: During this time you were part of the country mission and all and a fairly senior officer. What were we doing? Were we sitting around saying, "OK, let's do this or that? Were we waiting for directions to come out of Bonn or were we planning on how to deal with your German counterparts? To be integrated? What were you doing?

WEINLAND: We all in the mission began to do two different things; I continued the work I had of liaising with the Berlin government, so we continued to have our weekly meetings. We continued to attend meetings of the house of assembly and so on. We also began to be much more traditional political and economic reporting officers. Reporting on political developments in Berlin was a more important part of my job at this point. One of the things I had to do was go to all the party conventions and hear what it was they were planning to do. There was a national election in December of 1990 but I can't remember if there was a local Berlin election before that. All of that was something we were doing that was more conventionally political and economic reporting.

We were, of course, talking all the time to the Berlin government about what was going on and at a certain point, and again here my chronology is a little shaky, at a certain point I was directed also to start covering the activities of the Berlin government in the Soviet sector. I was directed to go to the meetings of the House of Representatives of the other side of Berlin, which was still functioning as a separate government from the government in the West. I began to attend those sessions as well and to try to extend my contacts to the Berlin politicians.

Q: Were you stepping on the toes of our embassy in East Germany?

WEINLAND: No, because according to the Berlin theology, Berlin was one city and therefore, although Embassy Berlin was accredited to the German Democratic Republic,

it was not allowed by us to report on events in Berlin itself. We never recognized the right of the East Germans to have their capital in the Soviet sector of Berlin. So the embassy was covering everything that was going on outside Berlin, but they were not permitted to contact the political parties in East Berlin, the house of assembly and so on.

Q: OK, let's go back before the Wall fell. Was it part of your job to go to East Berlin and to find out what these parties were doing?

WEINLAND: No.

Q: So this was sort of a vacuum.

WEINLAND: Well, they only had the Communist party.

Q: But still, you can only maybe have one party but you've still got political activity going on.

WEINLAND: That question makes me think that when I started to cover East Berlin, it must have been after March of 1990, because that was when the new government in all of the GDR was elected. Thomas de Maziere was elected the head of government in the GDR, from the Christian Democratic Party. This was the eastern branch of the same party as Helmut Kohl's, so there was now a Christian Democratic Party in the German Democratic Republic. I think it was in that election that they also elected a city government, which had probably had not been quite that well-defined up until then.

Our theory up until the opening of the Wall and then sort of vaguely going up toward those elections, our theory had been anything that happened in the eastern sector was the responsibility of the Soviets. So whenever there was something that happened in the eastern (Soviet) sector, we never went to the Berlin people there; we always went to the Soviets and said, “What is this going on? We hold you responsible for not shooting people

at the Wall" and those sorts of things. All three western missions had an officer who was specifically charged to be the liaison with the Soviet authorities in East Berlin.

Q: Was there sort of any activity from our embassy in Bonn and our mission in Berlin saying, "How are we going to rationalize all this" or was this sort of on a day to day, saying well, let's try this, let's try that?

WEINLAND: I think a good deal of it was on a day-to-day basis because, of course, from the perspective of the embassy in East Berlin, there was going to continue to be a viable government in the German Democratic Republic. Our embassy officers in East Berlin thought it would change, it would become democratic, and they had the elections in March. The embassy began to establish relationships with the new government, with de Maziere and so on, but we still had this strange anomaly of Berlin. It couldn't work within that kind of system.

Q: No, and particularly, what was happening to the West as far as this border was concerned? Were West Germans coming through into East Germany? I mean, was the whole thing sort of dissolving?

WEINLAND: Yes. Among other things, you needed to have political parties to have the election in March and the political parties in the Federal Republic of Germany, West Germany, were helping establish the new parties in the East. They were sending various kinds of party organizers, advisers and so on and so forth. There was, of course, a surviving party that grew out of the former Communist Party, the PDS, the Party of Democratic Socialism. It was made up of former communists who were finding it rather convenient to become democrats at that point. There was a CDU, Christian Democrats, there was SDP, the Social Democrat Party, from the West, there were the Greens who were trying to make headway in the East, so all the western parties were cooperating across boundaries and helping out like-minded citizens in the East.

And of course, Angela Merkel who is currently the chancellor of Germany, comes out of that Eastern CDU.

Again, my chronology is a little off, but fairly early on in this process, the two governments announced — I think it was even before the elections of March — they announced that they would unify the two currencies. The East German currency was virtually worthless, so they decided the West German mark would be extended to East Germany. They negotiated the arrangements by which things would be bought up at what rate and converted over to West German marks. That was to become effective I think on the first of July. They were working out the technicalities of changing over the currency like that. That can be a very complicated process.

Q: Were the files of the secret police coming open or had that happened while you were there?

WEINLAND: That happened while I was there. I can't remember if it was before or after March. Of course, those files contained huge amounts of information. It sounds as though, of all the eastern countries, East Germany had more informants per thousand inhabitants of any of the former Warsaw Pact members. Almost as soon as the Wall opened, groups of anti-communists broke into the offices of the Stasi (East German secret police), broke open the files, and in some cases threw them out the windows or burned them.

Q: Germans being Germans, everything was documented. We are still living off the German, Berlin documents from Nazi times.

WEINLAND: Those documents, of course, were in West Berlin. That was an important archive, and quite a number of Americans were working there.

Q: How about the German officials you had been dealing with? Were they getting restive about wanting to rationalize the administration of the city?

WEINLAND: Yes, but the first huge step that had to happen was that we had to end the war.

Q: You're talking about World War II?

WEINLAND: We're talking about World War II, which really officially ended only in June of 1990. The four allies, including the Soviet Union, were engaged in extremely intense negotiation about how that would take place. Did we need a treaty? Yes, we did. Who would sign it? What would the future arrangements be for the various armed forces that would remain stationed all throughout Germany, both East and West? What would be the role of the Warsaw Pact and NATO? Would NATO be extended to the East, would the Warsaw Pact continue to control the Eastern part of Germany?

Those were obviously very tense questions, and even the Western allies did not agree entirely on how it should happen. I think the Americans were more eager to get it properly resolved quickly than either the English or the French, but eventually we came to an understanding that it had to be done. A lot of our time in the spring of 1990 was to prepare for a ceremony that would be held in Berlin where the four foreign ministers of the World War II allies plus the two foreign ministers of the still-existing two Germanys, would all meet and sign a treaty document that would give full sovereignty to both the GDR and to Federal Republic of Germany. By June, everybody agreed on the terms on by which that would happen.

So in June of 1990 James Baker, our secretary of state at that time, came to Berlin as did all the other foreign ministers. The only part of it that I witnessed, which was sort of fun, was the decommissioning of Checkpoint Charlie. We had a somewhat odd commandant of the American troops. There was about a 5,000 troop Berlin brigade. He was the commandant of that brigade, and he had wanted to be the kind of big star at this event. You know, it was his crossing point. Then Mr. Baker decided that that would be a great photo op for him, so our unfortunate general had to take second place. He wasn't even

the chairman commandant that particular month. As I said, there was a system of rotating chairmanships among the three western allies, and our commandant was not the chairman in June, so he didn't even get to make the big speech from the military side. I think it was the English who did.

They brought everybody together, each foreign minister made a speech standing in front of the shed where Checkpoint Charlie on the Western side was based, and then while the band played “Up, Up and Away,” they lifted the shed off its moorings and swung it off to the side of the street. One of my friends in the Berlin brigade told me later that they had practiced at four in the morning to make sure they didn't drop it on anybody's head. It was not the first time that shed had been pulled off its little island in the middle of the road. But you know, it was a very moving ceremony.

Q: Somebody might not think about this. As they were trying to put this together another factor was the fact that the French and the British really weren't delighted about this. They had had some problems in Germany previously. We were much more eager. Did you have a feeling that we were, even at your level that we had the ball and we were running with it and every once in a while the British would sort of say, “God, slow down.”?

WEINLAND: Every once in a while in the meetings we had between the three Senat liaison officers . . . particularly my British colleague who was a closer friend and we were able to rib each other; our French colleague whose command of English obviously wasn't as good as ours would begin to get a little worried, you know as we would be teasing and ribbing, laughing at each other . . . At some point my British colleague came to one of these meetings and he said, “Is it true that your commandant is planning to preside over the decommissioning of Checkpoint Charlie”? This was the first I heard of it. I mean, we hadn't had any scuttlebutt within our mission that this was happening. So I said, “Uhhhh.” Apparently, John's commandant was somewhat nervous about the fact that our guy might be seizing the limelight and playing the liberator as opposed to the French and German commandants.

I think there was some nervousness and certainly Mrs. Thatcher was a little bit dubious about the negotiations.

There was also tension between the Germans and the British and French because they had very different ideas about the expansion both of the European Union and also NATO. The French supported the idea of what was called the 'wide shallow' theory which was that you would bring a lot of new countries into the EU but it wouldn't be that serious and deep an integration of all the economies and so on, whereas the Germans were driving much more for a deeper and tighter union.

When I lived in Berlin it was clear to me that a lot of my German friends, particularly some of the younger ones, didn't really trust themselves. They knew their terrible history, of course and they felt that they needed the security of some outside braking system, that they were always just a little bit nervous of what their country might get up to, and that there might come a time when that militarism and xenophobia would raise its ugly head again. There was always a kind of lack of confidence in their own democratization that struck me and upset me because I felt that they were essentially as democratic and committed to a democratic system as we were.

Q: What were you getting from your German colleagues in the Berlin government?

WEINLAND: I think they knew that they were going to unify and there began to be a lot of pressures on us; when are you leaving? They knew as well as we that it was not going to be possible to run that city as two separate entities and so a lot of our conversations were, “Well, we're planning to take this initiative and that initiative” and so on. Essentially, we were in a sort of put up or shut up mode. Sometimes we had to put up but essentially we shut up.

One of the big issues that came up was an initiative from West Germany — so we had relatively little inputhat had to do with landing rights and overflight rights for non-allied

aircraft. Up to this time, no aircraft other than airlines or military aircraft belonging either to Americans, British or French could land at either of the two airports in Berlin. Lufthansa was, of course, just crazy to get in on the act, and we really had a lot of pressure from the CEO of Lufthansa and from the German aviation people who wanted to start Lufthansa service to Berlin. We resisted it because we knew that the Russians would get upset if it happened before we had the treaty signed and delivered. It wasn't that we had anything against Lufthansa but essentially, TWA, Air France and British Air landed at Tegel airport and that was it.

One of the few ways in which the Russians continued to cooperate in four power control in Berlin was in air traffic control. There were always Russians present at the building in West Berlin where the air controllers controlled all the traffic coming in and out of the city, and so we didn't want to screw that up until we had an agreement.

Q: What about the U-Bahn?

WEINLAND: Oh, yes, the U-Bahn. There was one S-Bahn line that went all the way through, and that was the one to Friedrichstrasse station where there was a passport control and a border crossing. We Americans were on a line of the U-Bahn, the underground railroad, Metro, or whatever you call it here. The one that went by where I lived had originally gone all the way over into East Berlin to one of the outer sections of East Berlin; that tunnel had been blocked and the rails had been torn up for a couple of miles. It now ended in West Berlin and picked up again in East Berlin, so that opening that connection and also one of the big S-Bahn lines further to the south, those were priorities. Otherwise, you had to go up into the city, switch over somewhere and then take the S-Bahn that did go to Friedrichstrasse, and it added a half hour to the trip.

Q: So that was done rather quickly?

WEINLAND: Yes, It was a huge job, so I don't know that it was finished by the time I left, but yes, they began to work on the plans for that pretty quickly.

Q: What about the canals?

WEINLAND: I don't believe the canals were ever blocked and closed. I am trying to think. Our commandant had a boat and my two colleagues told me they would really like to have one of our weekly meetings or monthly lunches or something take place on the boat because it was such fun to go from the Wannsee through the canal system and past the East German parliament. I am pretty sure we were able to navigate all the way into the eastern part of the city.

You know that Berlin is built on a shallow sand plain with an extremely high water table; I think the water table is only about six to twelve feet underneath the street level so this whole system of canals is a very important link through the city and helps to keep the water levels regulated.

Q: Did you notice much of a divide between Ossis and the Wessis, I mean the East Germans and the West Germans? Were you able to figure out the reactions?

WEINLAND: Well, there was both the internal issue, which became much more important as we got toward October but there was also the general issue. I think more in Berlin than in the Federal Republic of Germany there was sensitivity to the fact that there was a great disparity in income and political development and all kinds of other factors. There grew up not too slowly, it came pretty fast, a resentment on the part of the East Germans of what they considered very high handed and bossy West German behavior. There was a kind of an attitude on the part of the West German businessmen and potential investors and even party people and so on that, “We know how to run things so just get out of our way and we'll come in and solve all these problems.” The Ossis, the Easterners, began to say, “You know, we're not stupid and we have some of our own ideas and particularly,

we have systems of taking care of people with pensions and health systems and all these kinds of things that aren't all bad. We'd like to talk about these things and not just have the steamroller come in from the West."

A sidelight of this issue is that in spring 1990 I went to Czechoslovakia to see a friend and I said, "You know, it's too bad you don't have a big, rich uncle in the West to help you get onto your feet." She said, "I'm glad we are doing it on our own. I wouldn't want to have to put up with what the East Germans are having to put up with." So even people in Czechoslovakia, who were also going through their own very difficult transition, felt that.

The real problem was the German Democratic Republic had an industrial infrastructure that was disastrous; first of all, it was terribly polluting, they depended on a lot of brown coal, they didn't care where they dumped chemical wastes and all these environmental problems, and they also had huge, very inefficient factories. The Westerners were right in a way that they knew better how to calculate cost benefits and do budgeting and so on because that never was a major consideration of the eastern countries.

I went around, fairly late in the game, I think it was after unification, to call on the head of the CDU in the Berlin parliament, not the whole country, just the Berlin CDU, the Christian Democrats, whom I always found much more unpleasant than the Social Democrats. I went into his office with my assistant and I asked, "I am sort of interested to know, is this party congress that is coming up, how are you going to do this? How will you get together with the CDU from the east?" I can't even remember what the particular issues were. He essentially said to me, "What are you wasting my time for, asking me these dumb questions?" I said, "Well, I mean one of the things that occurs to me is that there is a certain set of issues and that it may not work quite as smoothly as you think. As you come to unify the party, there may be certain kinds of issues . . ." and I can't remember what they were. He actually backed off and said, "Oh, OK. I see what you are getting at." There was an interest in the East in having a helping hand, but they resented very deeply the manner in which it was extended.

Internally, between the mission and the embassy there was a terrific problem because we had a lot of Germans working in our mission because it was a big operation. I think there were about 277, what we call Foreign Service Nationals. In the East they did not have any sort of traditional Foreign Service Nationals as a security measure; they brought in American contractors to do a lot of the sort of routine work of either analyzing, reading newspapers and translating and certain kinds of protocol and secretarial work and also guards and all those kinds of employees.

But once we got past October 1990 and Germany was unified, we now had a fairly large embassy in East Berlin and we had a mission in West Berlin. The mission in West Berlin no longer had any work to do, of the kind that had existed, that we were traditionally expected to perform. We were obviously going to have just one office.

It was a very delicate thing, because it was being driven from Bonn, which was making the decision about what the staffing pattern would be in this new entity. They drew up all the position descriptions and advertised them so that the 277 people working for us in the West were bidding on 77 jobs that were going to continue to exist once we had a unified consulate general. There was incredible tension in our mission about who was going to get those 77 jobs. All of us who were supervising these various people — I supervised three people — we were all, of course, writing glowing reports about how our person was best suited to do X,Y or Z. The day the letters came out saying either, “Thank you for applying, but we don't have a position for you” or “We are happy to offer you this position,” was a very bad day. The people who lost out were very nasty to the people who won out. They couldn't rejoice in their success because they had lost their jobs. I was very fortunate, because all three of the people who worked for me were kept on; two of them are still working in the new embassy. That was another part of unification that was very stressful on everybody.

I guess I should get a little bit into October because after the signing of the treaty

Q: That's October, 1990?

WEINLAND: 1990, after the signing of the treaty in June, then it was full speed ahead. By then it was clear that German unification was going to occur on their national day in October, so we had to prepare to get out of our offices and all the rest of it. All through that summer there was very heavy activity, reassigning as many Americans who could be reassigned quickly, to get them out of the way so we didn't have totally redundant positions. I was going to have to stay on until the next spring. I was worried about what I would do when I was no longer Senat liaison officer. We were going to have about two or three more political officers than we really needed. Where we would work was another huge issue. We had an embassy building in East Berlin; where we were working in West Berlin was called headquarters building. It had been a huge building built under the Nazis as the headquarters of the Luftwaffe in the Berlin region. It wasn't the whole Luftwaffe, but it was for the Berlin region so it was a huge pile of stone, fairly far out toward the western edge of town. The embassy building in East Berlin was not too far from the Brandenburg Gate so that was fairly centrally located.

The question was, would we move over to the East? Well, if you moved over to the East, there were no computers available in your office; you had to go to a few computers that were in a classified, secure area. In West Berlin I had my own computer station in my office. The telephone system in the East was pretty bad, and this was before there were such things as cell phones readily available. It just seemed a nightmare of communications problems. Although I was assigned to an office in the East, which I was to share with a college intern even though I was the second ranking person in the section, I just said, “I think I will just continue to work here.”

We had all these problems like where our mail was delivered. There were classified couriers who had to come over once a day with the classified stuff. I really feel even though I was being badgered by both our wonderful minister and also by my immediate

boss, the political counselor, I feel I did the right thing because I just felt easier having a better communication system.

I had been in Nigeria before being in Berlin. One of the things I had learned there was how to work around a non-functioning communications system, which was just to go physically, get a driver, and go physically to the place where you wanted to meet somebody. If he was there, you'd meet him and if he wasn't, you'd leave a note and say, “I'll be back Tuesday at 10” or something. The thing that amused me — or gave me this wonderful German word Schadenfreude, a rejoicing in the sufferings of others — or increased my Schadenfreude was that the people who were working in the eastern part of the city, who had never served in a third world country, they were all a part of the “German Club” (they just moved from one German post to the next), they would just throw up their hands and say, “I can't get hold of anybody. I don't know how to find this guy. His telephone doesn't work. My telephone doesn't work.” I said, “Well, get in a car and go to his office.” “Oh.” So that was sort of fun for me to needle them that way.

After October, we were gearing up for all-German elections in December of 1990, now that the country was unified. I had now become a pure political officer and that meant I was reporting on all the political activity in Berlin. Others were reporting on various outlying states. At that point I was working hard to continue meeting political leaders from the East. I was also attending party congresses in both East and West, going to political rallies to judge the size of the crowd and what kinds of election promises were being made and so on. It was a lot of fun; I really enjoyed political reporting work when I was in the Foreign Service. This was a really good time and place to be doing that kind of work.

The elections were in December. I can remember going to someplace where the returns were coming in. Under the German system — and this is common in a lot of places where there is a parliamentary system rather than a system like ours — a political party often has to achieve a certain percentage in an election in order to have any seats at all in the parliament. The German system is complicated because the parties draw up lists

of candidates and so, say, your party wins 15% of the seats and there are 100 seats in whatever the body is, you get 15 seats, so the top 15 people on your list get into the parliament. At that time in Germany the minimum percentage was 5%, so if a party fell below 5% of the vote, it got no seats.

I can remember the shock on the face of the Green Party leader. That party had been a sizeable force, actually, in the Berlin House of Representatives because it was the coalition partner that put the SDP into the majority, so it was in coalition in the government. I can remember seeing the look on his face when he began to realize the Greens were going to come in under 5%.

The CDU won those elections with a fairly good majority, which really was a portent of the future and caused a lot of realignment, in both East and West, in how they were going to set up their government.

Once the elections were over, I really didn't have any job at all. There wasn't anything left to report on. Berlin was now a backwater, it wasn't yet the capital. There wasn't anything there that was all that interesting to anybody in Washington. So the economic officer, who was equally underemployed, and I cooked up a scheme to travel all around eastern Germany and Berlin and talk to leaders of the major religious groups about the unification of all the Catholics, the Protestants and some of the other smaller groups, how they were doing it, what the various dynamics of their unification were as an example of the problems of unifying the country.

That actually turned out to be an interesting project. It kept us busy for a couple of months, tooling around and talking to people.

One of the things that came to light was that in the Federal Republic of Germany, still today, there exists what is called the religious tax. If you are a practicing member of a faith community, when you first go to work, you say for example, “I am a member of the Reform Church and I want to pay the religious tax and I designate my share of it to go to

the Reform Church.” The government takes 7% of the income tax you pay to the central government and pays it to whatever denomination you indicate. From that, the religious authorities pay the clergy. Thus, the clergy are paid from funds collected by the secular tax authorities rather than from donations from the members of the church directly to that particular parish or whatever.

If you interviewed West German religious leaders or people in West Berlin who were members of churches and asked, “Well, do you think they are going to extend this tax and put this in effect in East Germany?” they'd say, “Of course, how else?” This is a wonderful thing about bureaucrats: “How else would you do it?” There is only one way to do something, so that's it.

Then you would go to the East. The situation in the East was entirely different because under the Communists, the churches had been entirely responsible for the payment of their clergy, upkeep of their buildings, many of which were of course, very beautiful and old and all the other things that they had to pay for.

The other thing that was troubling to the religious leaders in the East was that under communism, being active religiously was an important way to resist the domination of the government. So if you were anti-communist and you didn't want to actually go out and throw bricks at the party headquarters, often people would join a church as a quiet and somewhat sanctioned form of resistance. That motivation was now gone, and the churches were finding that their congregations were beginning to drop off because that extra motivation was gone. You would go around and ask, “Are you going to have this religious tax?” And they'd say, “Well, you know, we really like the fact that we are independent and that we get to raise our own money and we get to decide how we are going to spend it within our congregations.”

So there was this kind of tension going on. I think ultimately, after we left, I think it did fall out in the direction of paying the religious tax. There were issues that really showed the Ossi-Wessi split that were quite interesting as we worked on that report.

The other thing was that in the West, as in this country, many social services are delivered by faith communities so hospital visitation and hospital chaplaincy, running nursery schools and those kinds of things in education, doing social service work among disadvantaged youth — all these kinds of things had not been possible under the communist regime. That was all a part of the party's responsibility. The party was now no longer in charge so a lot of the churches in the East were beginning to say, “We are going to have to take on these functions of Christian education and so on. We need to think of how we are going to pay for all this and how we will reorient our mission.”

So it was an interesting project that took us a couple of months and brought us up to May when I left.

Let me give you one final little anecdote. About two weeks before I was leaving, which would have been in May, I went to East Berlin to do some administrative work around my move. I was riding back on the S-Bahn, and sitting right across from me was someone who had been one of my contacts in city hall when I was doing my liaison work. I said, “How is it all going, Mr. X? Everything OK?” He said, “Well, we are starting to move people over to the East and some of the people you need to work with are here and some of the people are there.” I said, “Yes, the same thing is happening with us. I am actually about to leave, but I knew it was time to leave about two weeks ago when I went to the ladies' room and it was locked.” They were closing down Headquarters Berlin.

Q: Would you care to comment about the gender issue in the Foreign Service, your experiences. How did you see this because you were there during a developing period, sort of the overall picture. Would you like to talk about that a bit?

WEINLAND: We spoke a little yesterday about when I entered.

I entered the Foreign Service in 1974, which was a year or two after a major lawsuit against the Department of State brought by a woman named Allison Palmer. She had won her case. The basis of her complaint was that she had been discriminated against systematically in assignments, and, of course, assignments are what got you promoted so promotions, the size of her office, the duties that were given to her were all affected by the gender discrimination she suffered.. It involved the whole range of things that had to do with her work environment.

So the Department of State had lost this lawsuit in '72 or '73, so presumably, that should have changed things. Yesterday when I was being taped I said that when I was seeking my first assignment, I was offered the choice of three jobs for my first posting. This was when I was still in my introductory orientation. I chose one of them, to go as a consular officer to Medan, Indonesia, where we had a consulate. I was turned down by the panel. At that time, the “panel” was supposed to be a secret process, but I learned subsequently from someone who had been a member of the panel that the argument against my assignment had been that was I was a woman, it was a Moslem country, I could not be effective, even as a very junior officer, so I didn't get the job.

Not too long after that when I was looking for a job coming out of Zurich I remember that I went to see someone whom I knew in the support staff for the secretary of state. He knew all the people who worked on the seventh floor, and there was an opening for a fairly junior staff assistant in the office of the undersecretary for political affairs. My friend, a male, called the person he knew and said, “Helen Weinland is in town and she would like to come around and talk to you about this job.” The other man said, “Oh, we've had a woman in that job and we are really not interested in having another one.”

So that is actually when I went to the Op Center and so that was that.

Not too long after that I was stationed in an office where I was actually sexually harassed by a colleague, not one superior to me but one who was equal to me, and I complained about it on my officer efficiency report. I said this had affected my performance to some extent because it was very upsetting to have all these sexist jokes being made in my presence and being constantly quizzed about whom I was dating and where I went to pick up men and all this kind of stuff. I kept saying, “Cut this out” and it just kept on.

I actually was blamed for complaining in my officer evaluation report for having said that. I think it affected subsequent assignments.

Q: Yes, because these things hang on.

WEINLAND: And they get out in the corridors and when the promotion boards are meeting. You know, “I've heard she's hard to get along with.”

At some point a new group formed to bring another class action suit against the Department of State, I think in the late '70s, early '80s. To my everlasting shame, I opted out of that class. I cannot tell you now why I did that. I had even taught women's studies when I was at Ohio State, and I should have known better. Anyway, I did opt out of it, but the class action was successful even without me! The Department was ordered in the mid-80s, I think, to undertake remedial actions such as including women on promotion boards and in other ways that there would be an equal treatment of female employees. Of course, certain kinds of actions that were now illegal under federal law were also ruled out, so that you couldn't say to somebody, “You can't have this job because you are a woman.”

The most egregious thing that happened, and egregious because it happened after this lawsuit was settled, was when I was again looking for reassignment in the summer of 1988. I wasn't due out until the summer of 1989, but during the summer of '88 I was going around talking to various people about jobs that were coming open. By this time I had quite a bit of experience in Africa, both in Washington and out in the field. The political counselor

job was coming open in Nairobi, and I wrote to the ambassador in Nairobi, a woman, and I introduced myself, saying I've had this experience, I would like to bid on the political counselor job in Nairobi.

She designated her deputy chief of mission to speak with me when he came to the Department for consultation.

So I made a date with him and went up to the office where he was working. I went in, said, “Hi, I'm Helen Weinland,” and sat down. The first thing he said to me was, “I hope you didn't write to Ambassador Constable about this job because you are a woman and you thought that would give you an inside track.” I said, “I wrote to Ambassador Constable because I have a lot of experience in Africa and I think I would do a good job for you.”

This gives you some idea of how the conversation proceeded because among other things he said, “All things being considered, we would really rather have a man in that job because there are already too many women in the embassy.” I have never heard anyone complain about too many men in the embassy.

I don't react very quickly to these things. What I should have done was open the door and ask one of the secretaries sitting outside to come in and ask him to repeat what he had just said to me, but I didn't. I did go subsequently to both the deputy assistant secretary in the bureau, who was responsible for personnel issues and to a woman deputy assistant secretary, also in the Africa Bureau. I told them what had been said to me. They were sympathetic but it was clear to me that they were going to do nothing to help me or to chastise him, although the personnel DAS said to me, “George told me he said that to you and I was really surprised to hear that.” The one thing I can say is that he failed to get a renewal of his contract the next year, so he was selected out. It could have been that those kinds of issues were fairly rampant. He did say those things to me.

I could have made a fuss about it except that the position was a ranked a grade above my personal rank and I was not promoted in that cycle. Thus, I could not make a strong case

to get the job. I was caught in that bind and wasn't really able to make an issue out of it. Fortunately so, since I went to Berlin in that assignment cycle and am glad I got that job at that time.

One final note: you know, they are always fooling around with the evaluation system because the Department in all its wisdom never can quite come up with a system for evaluating people that corrects for the fact that most evaluations are inflated. You usually inflate what you are saying about anybody unless you really think he or she should not be promoted. Mostly, you like the people you are working with, you get along with them, you think they are smart, you think they should be promoted. So you try to write them as nice an evaluation as possible.

When I was in my last post in Kaduna, a cable came out from the Department to all posts that said, “We are trying to think how to revise the evaluation system so that there is no disadvantage to women in the way the evaluations are written.” It said, “For example, very often we see in evaluations of women officers that they are praised for being charming, for being pleasant and other kinds of soft virtues that are more usually ascribed to women, and they get fewer comments along the line that she is effective in putting her point forward, she drives for good results,” that is, all these aggressive sorts of things that are more often put into men's evaluations. “So we would like your comments on this whole problem, and here are some ideas we have.”

They were talking about establishing a system in which people would be identified by number. At that time, you would write the evaluation and say, “Ms. Johnson is a very effective political officer, her writing is clear, succinct, she meets all her deadlines,” you know, all these wonderful things. So with the proposed change, you were not going to say “Ms. Weinland” or “Ms. Johnson” or “Susan” or anything that would tip the promotion panel off that this was a woman. You wouldn't use the pronouns, “she” or “her.” Instead, you would refer to this person as, say, “276.” Everybody would be numbered and so you would say, “276 is an effective officer because 276 does this, that and the other.” You couldn't

use “his” or “her.” Maybe they would permit you to say their and they as a neutral kind of pronoun construction.

There were a couple of other examples of what might be done and I thought, “This is the stupidest thing I ever saw.” It is hard enough to write these things. When OER time comes around, I was the principal officer by this time, and so I was going to have to write about six of these things and the thought of saying “276 this and that” was just ridiculous.

Over my entire career I had seen many cases of male officers failing to be effective because they lacked charm, cultural awareness, an ability to work interculturally, an ability to be an effective host at representational events, all of these things that were considered female virtues. So my suggestion to the Department, which I do not believe was ever even passed on to the next person, was that I thought men should be evaluated on the “female” virtues of collaboration, intercultural working effectiveness, being charming and gracious and so on and so forth. This is obviously not a set of virtues that is recognized by some in the Foreign Service.

You have to be watching all the time when you are talking to people. You have to be careful, for example, not to tell jokes or to be ironic about things because we are Americans. If an American employee made a joke to me, I would know the context it was coming from, but if he or she was in an Arab leader's office and was trying to get him to agree to do something, or explaining an American policy and made some sort of ironic, offhand remark, the Arab leader is not going to pick up on it. I have seen a lot of people do that in the Foreign Service. It builds a wall between you and the person you are talking to.

Q: I have heard people comment that William Rogers as secretary of state sometimes would be speaking with a leader, say from the Arab world or somewhere and telling about his golf game. If nothing else, it was wasted time, but it also raises the question of why Rogers thought the leader would have the slightest interest in his golf game.

WEINLAND: Yes, but that's the way guys bond in the States, that's a guy thing in the States. It's perfectly acceptable within our culture.

Q: You can write an efficiency report by saying, "George is a very aggressive promoter of our cause" but if you say, "Helen is a very aggressive promoter of our cause", it's, "Oh, my God. She's one of those radical feminists." It's a real problem.

I don't know. I've been out of this game now for over 20 years, but as I am interviewing more and more women who have reached senior ranks my impression is that the Foreign Service is becoming more, I won't say feminized but more neutralized or something that perhaps these things are no longer as much an issue. I don't know.

WEINLAND: I don't know either. I hope so. I think both sets of virtues are important. You do need to be aggressive. If you have been told by the Department of State to go in and talk with somebody and tell them why we want them to vote our way on some issue in the U.N. or support us some other way, you need to be direct and forceful. You need to be able to say we really are counting on you for this and it could have these kinds of effects down the line in our relationship.

On the other hand, you catch more flies with honey. I always felt a good slathering of honey was a useful thing to put on the bread.

Q: One of my bosses, Barbara Watson used to tell me that.

So you left Berlin in the spring of 1991?

WEINLAND: Right.

Q: Whither?

WEINLAND: Kaduna, Nigeria. I had quite a bit of time back in the States because of course, I wasn't due out until August so I did some training and I took a lot of home leave.

The day after Hurricane Bob in August and the day after Yeltsin's performance on the top of the tank shouting down the coup leaders in Russia, I took off for Lagos. It was very interesting to go back to Lagos after ten years away because the city had grown enormously; the problems that had existed there had gotten worse; traffic and crime and all that. Even worse, the civilian government that I had been so involved in watching come to life and nudging along the way, had been overthrown in 1983 in a military coup. Then there had been a second military coup so by the time I got to Nigeria in 1991, there was a military government led by a gentleman named Ibrahim Babangida. He had announced a couple of years earlier that the country was going to move to civilian rule and that process was underway.

The military leadership had decided to divide up all the elections and space them out very deliberately over a two or three year period. By the time I got there, they had formed two political parties. When they had first lifted the blanket on political activity, something like 200 parties came out of the woodwork. Babangida being a military man and dedicated to order and chain of command had said, “This isn't going to work,” and he erased that particular process and said, “Now we are going to create two parties. We, the military, are going to say there will be two parties; one to the left of center and one to the right of center. Now, you all go out and decide which one you are going to be in and get set to contest some elections.”

Many people who had been active in the earlier democratic government were banned from political activity, so under those kinds of manipulations, the Nigerians began the series of elections, the first of which were local government elections, roughly comparable, say, to a county election in this country. The local government authorities were in place by the time I arrived in August 1991.

The next big step was going to be state governments for state assemblies and governors. I came in on that act.

I was assigned to Kaduna, where the U.S. has had a consulate (by 1991 a consulate general) from the time that Nigeria became independent. At that time, in 1960, there had been three regions in the country: north, west and east. Kaduna had been the consulate for the entire northern part of Nigeria which was about two thirds of the land area of the country. Kaduna had been the traditional seat for the British government in the Northern Region when it had been the colonial power. So that's where we had established our consulate.

Kaduna was an interesting town. I think the British had chosen to put their authority there because it was not the seat of any of the traditional emirates throughout the northern part of the country. The emirates were what had come down through history as the seats of powerful Muslim rulers who were roughly described, most of them, as Hausa-Fulani. Most of the emirs were actually Fulani. It's one of these interesting examples where one group of people had conquered another, but the language that was universally spoken in the area was the language of the conquered peoples, the Hausa, and not the conquerors. That's why they are often called Hausa-Fulani but they are actually two distinct groups.

The northern region, and therefore my consular district, included a very large number of smaller tribes than the Hausa-Fulani or the other two big tribes in Nigeria, the Yoruba and Ibo. Some of them were quite big. There were maybe seven or eight million people in some of these tribes like the Tiv, the Nupe, the Kanuri and a few others. And then there were some very small groups: one town might have a chief in it and some thousands of people in that particular group.

Kaduna was on the edge between the very traditional emirates of the far north and these other, much smaller groups that were to the south, in what is called the Middle Belt. That was where the Christian and Muslim met along that fault line. The Hausa-Fulani were

almost all Moslem and the other groups were either largely Christian or else still, some of them, animists and traditional Nigerian religion.

Kaduna was also an important military town, because the British had been there, and that was where the British authority had been established. The Nigerian Defense Academy was located there, the Command and Staff College was just north of town, and the headquarters of one of the major army divisions was also based in Kaduna. There was a big military presence. Because of that, a lot of retired military also lived in that area and had built themselves retirement homes and were big businessmen in town.

It was an interesting town to be in. It had a pretty vibrant industrial and commercial center; there was textile manufacturing. Again, because it had been the administrative center of the north, a lot of big banks, insurance companies, and other service sector companies had their headquarters there. And it had one of the two petroleum refineries in Nigeria. That had been located there even though the oil was in the south, so that there would be a regional distribution of that kind of activity. It was a sizeable city and very interesting just in itself.

The consular district was also very interesting. Obviously, one of the things you do when you first get to a place is run around both the city you are in and the country, the area you are in, and meet as many people as you possibly can.

The biggest, traditional city was Kano, about two hours north of Kaduna, close to the border with Niger. There was an international airport in Kano. Kano still had the traditional mud wall that encircled the old city, had a huge traditional market and a number of traditional Moslem businessmen, some of whom were quite prominent.

Kano had been one of the cities on the traditional trans-Saharan trade route between Egypt and the coastal areas of say, Ghana and Nigeria and further west. Gold from Ghana, salt and other commodities would go in one direction, other goods come in the

other. There was a vibrant trade in that part of Nigeria that extended back six or seven centuries.

I was the consul general in Kaduna. We had a fairly substantial responsibility for reporting on political events during this period of democratization and also an increasing interest in Moslem-Christian relations, which could erupt from time to time into extremely violent and nasty bloodshed.

Q: Were there missionaries in the area?

WEINLAND: Yes, there were missionaries in Kaduna, both Catholic and Protestant missionaries. When we traveled around there were a number of American missionaries we called on. The Protestants had, in another town in the north in my district, Jos, another sort of melting pot town, a school, the Hillcrest School, which was one of the better schools in all of Nigeria. It served to educate the children of missionaries all across West Africa. So yes, that was a sizeable part of our American population that we had to keep tabs on and have on our warden system, which occasionally we did have to activate. But by this time, the number of expatriate missionaries was much reduced, as the evangelizing work was being carried on by the Nigerian pastors and lay workers who had been trained. It's expensive to station an American missionary overseas, and most denominations had cut back considerably on that side of their work.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

WEINLAND: I served under three different ambassadors in the less than three years I was there. When I arrived, the ambassador was Lannon Walker. He left a year later and was replaced by Bill Swing who only served for a year before he was yanked to go to Haiti, I believe. Haiti had heated up at that point and they wanted an experienced person to be there. At that point, we were assigned a political appointee ambassador named Walter Carrington. I served under all three.

Q: Did the embassy intrude much on you or were you pretty much on your own?

WEINLAND: I was pretty much on my own. I was able to report without clearance from the embassy, which was a welcome delegation of authority. Our admin was pretty much run from the embassy. We had no B&F (Budget and Fiscal) function; the big admin decisions of staffing patterns and all that were made in Lagos. The embassy was still in Lagos at that time although it was preparing to move to the new capital, Abuja. We had an admin officer but her primary functions were more those of a GSO than an admin counselor would have had. That of course, was an extremely important function for us in a country where things just didn't work as they were supposed to. You had to do work-arounds and be pretty creative in solving some of the problems that came up.

Q: What were your major functions while you were there, your major interests?

WEINLAND: Well, first and foremost was the move to democracy. Lannon Walker even before I got there, had worked with USAID to design a program whereby USAID would fund a program of some millions of dollars to support civil society institutions like co-ops, women's groups, a bar association, the development of a free press. I can't remember all the categories but there were about six or seven different categories of civil society institutions for which we were funding travel to and from the United States, all kinds of assistance from private groups like the League of Women Voters and the NDI, the National Democratic Institute, those two institutes. I can't remember if there was a labor union component to it, there may have been. Those kinds of institutions we were trying to bring together in cooperation. That was one of Walker's big initiatives and I think one that ultimately was not very successful.

Q: What was your assessment of northern feeling about the distribution of oil revenue? I mean was it going into the pockets of people in Lagos or was it getting spread around?

WEINLAND: Nigeria had a special commission that represented all the parts of the country; it was supposed to develop the formula by which oil revenue was distributed. The government had just created a whole new round of new states, so some oil money was going into the infrastructure to start those states up. Whenever there was a round of creation of new states, something that happened periodically after the Civil War in Nigeria, care was taken to create an equal number north and south.

In Nigeria, people perpetually feel they are not getting their fair share. Among other things the oil revenue distribution formula was supposed to provide a special amount for the peoples in the Niger delta where a lot of the oil was being pumped; they were suffering from serious environmental degradation. The oil companies, of course, were supposed to be ameliorating that and providing certain social services like clinics and schools as part of the royalty deals they had made with the Nigerian government. Of course, in the delta area, in the south, they never felt it was enough and they may have been right. In the north they felt that they had always been gypped compared to the areas in the east and the south. That was always a matter of tension.

I arrived at a time of high activity — the gubernatorial elections, the implementation of the democratization project. We were just reestablishing a Peace Corps back in Nigeria. There had been a very unfortunate incident years and years before when some Peace Corps Volunteer had written a post card critical of Nigeria.

Q: That goes back to the earliest days of the Peace Corps.

WEINLAND: In the '60s, yes. We had pulled all the Peace Corps out of the east during the Biafra secession and then that thing happened, so we hadn't had a Peace Corps there for years. Peace Corps had begun to build up staff and they had an office in Kaduna. That's where the country Peace Crops director was located; he was not at the embassy. The first class of volunteers, I think there were 12 or perhaps 20, a relatively small number, arrived relatively early on in my time in Kaduna.

Q: How did they fit in?

WEINLAND: Some of them did very, very well. It was a typical Peace Corps thing. Some of them did very well, stayed their entire tour, and were quite effective in their areas and in their projects. A couple of them were helpful in the ambassador's special self-help program. I don't know if you are familiar with that program, but ambassadors are given a certain amount of money in the budget every year that can be doled out in small amounts, like $1,000 here, a couple thousand there for projects that are proposed from the local people. There's generally a committee in the embassy that decides who should get the grants; often the committee will say, “This year we are going to concentrate on water projects or educational infrastructures.” Some of the Peace Corps volunteers were active in getting organizations in their communities to apply for funds, and they helped see the applications through to approval.

I do know that at least twice I went to projects that were being initiated; one was the digging of a well in an area where people had been depending on surface wells, so we paid for cement and other materials and some of the labor to have an actual dug well, part of a guinea worm eradication project that the Peace Corps Volunteer in that area was supporting. That was a great celebration. There was dancing in the town's square and circling the well and a little play was performed to talk about why it is important to have clean water. It was really fun.

Another was a women's sewing co-op in Kano.

Q: What about the Sahel? I know there is often drought in that area? It comes and goes. What was the situation then?

WEINLAND: I was not there during a period of particular drought; I think the rains were pretty good during the time I was there. Of course, the people in the north are dry weather farmers. The World Bank had, I think maybe during the time or a little earlier than when I

had been in Lagos, funded a number of irrigation projects in the north so some agriculture was irrigated. It is an area where a lot of cotton is grown, not a crop that is particularly kind to the soil. The distribution of fertilizers and the availability of farm machinery is always a problem in areas where the farmers are often very poor and depend on co-op marketing and the like.

The north is a heavily agricultural area; they grow a lot of sorghum and millet, and a certain amount of wheat and cotton. There is sugar cultivation in the northeast where was at least one big sugar mill.

In the plateau area in the center of the country, which is higher and more temperate than the surrounding area, they have fairly rich soils and they grow a lot of potatoes and other vegetables. Toward the middle belt of Nigeria, the farmers grew a lot of yams but these are not a food that's heavily consumed in the far north where they tend to eat more like North Africans, more sorghum and millet. Those were the two big grain crops in the north.

Q: I think of that area up there as being Hausa-Fulani, men on their horses and wonderful costumes like turbans and all that. It's Islamic there, mainly isn't it?

WEINLAND: Mostly, once you get north of Kaduna. But of course that traditional culture only comes out on the big Moslem holidays, and largely for the benefit of tourists.

Q: How did that play out? There's Islamic and Islamic. In your time, what was the situation?

WEINLAND: Most Nigerian Muslims are Sunni and most of them are fairly moderate, or at least in those days were fairly moderate in their practices but many, quite devout. There was a more radical leader, Maitatsine. In the time I had been in Lagos, he whipped up a group of followers who began to raise a lot of havoc. There were serious riots in some of the northern cities until the police and sometimes the army got a handle on it. It was

a pretty bloody operation and Maitatsine was, himself, killed during that time. I think his followers had been relatively quiet for most of the time when I got to Kaduna.

But not too long after I arrived, I arrived in August.

Q: August of?

WEINLAND: 1991. Maybe a couple of months later there was a terrible riot in Kano, a large city; it has maybe five million inhabitants. The traditional center of town is very Muslim, that's where the market is, that's where the central mosque is and the walls encircle that. There was a very large area outside the walls, which in northern cities is called the sabon gari, the place where strangers live. In Kano, that was largely Ibo traders. What would happen would be some incident in that market, and then people would begin to burn and loot and go on rampages and it really was pretty terrible. The religious element would get mixed in, sooner or later.

I am trying to think; there was a riot in 1991 and then there were bad riots during the time when I happened to be on R&R in 1992 or 1993. The 1991 riot in Kano was sparked off by the presence in the city of an evangelical preacher of German origin who had gone to Kano to lead a revival meeting. His loudspeaker cars and posters and other advertising were spread in the traditional city. There was terrible resentment, and a feeling of “You can do whatever you want outside the walls but don't come in where we are and start telling us there is going to be this Christian revival meeting.” So the whole place went up in flames. I think there were probably a couple of thousand people killed, and a lot of non-Muslim establishments were burned down, like the movie theater, hotels and restaurants and places like that were all torched and burned down. There was a regular corridor of destruction outside the traditional city.

The first report we had came from a couple of consulate groups that happened to be in Kano when the trouble started; the commercial office driver was caught in a roadblock that he managed to evade, and another car was in the middle of the city, and had to take

a roundabout journey through back roads to get out of town. They reported to us that the violence was building. We had the warden system that connected all American citizens in case of emergency. The British did as well, and the first detailed news we had of what was going on was a relay from a British citizen in Kano. Bonke was, I think, a German citizen by origin, but may have been based somewhere in the U.S. I got a call about midnight from the State Department saying that Pat Robertson's organization had telephoned the State Department to say that a group of American evangelical proselytizers was being “held hostage” in Kano and they were worried about their safety.

I was going up to Kano in any case the next day because our defense attach# plane was coming in from the far northeast carrying our DCM. I had already been scheduled to go up and meet him and bring him down to Kaduna for continued travel. I said to these people in the State Department, “I am going up there and I will go out to the airport and see what is going on.”

I went to Kano and my driver talked to some people on the edge of town and they said, “Don't go through this way”, the most direct way to get to the airport “because there is still a lot of trouble and unrest.” So we went all the way around the city and got to the airport. As I was walking into the airport building toward the office of the airport commandant (it was a joint air force-civilian airport so the commandant was an air force officer), there were all these people in big easy chairs along the hallway. I asked, “Are you American citizens?” They all said, “Yes.” I said, “What's going on?” They said, “Well, we were brought here from our hotel because things were really getting pretty hot downtown and, as we speak, the commandant is arranging for us to get on flights down to Lagos so we can leave.” Bonke had already been boarded on a flight to get him out of the center of trouble.

I got into the commandant's office. Here I am on my consular horse protecting my American citizens, and I said, “Hello, I'm Helen Weinland. What's going on?” The whole situation was already totally resolved. He had gotten all these people onto early flights down to Lagos. They were waiting for the flights to load up and take off. They had been

given comfortable accommodation in all these great big plush chairs, not the most comfortable things, but they were not sleeping on bare cement floor. The leader of the group was effusive in his thanks to me for having come to “rescue” them. He wrote me a lovely letter when they got home saying I had been so helpful, so I was not loathe to take the credit for having solved this problem.

Q: Were we sort of monitoring Islam up in that area?

WEINLAND: Definitely.

Q: How does one monitor Islam? How did you monitor it?

WEINLAND: That's a difficult question. Well, you would just talk to people and say, “What's going on in this part of the country? What kinds of things are being preached at Friday mosque?” And you would just watch the crowds going to Friday mosque, who seemed to be very peaceable. When one of these kinds of events erupted, I would go to various people who were friendly to us and just say, “What happened? Why is this going on?” and “Who is behind this kind of thing?” One of the things you would say is, “Are people being trained in the Sudan and Iran? Are there influences from those places coming in?”

As far as we could tell at that time, some people were going to Sudan or other places, perhaps Libya, for education. Some of the imams and mullahs were trained in those places but most of the Muslims I knew were leaders, the elites, not the hoi polloi, and they were either quite relaxed in their practices or were devout but not in any politically radical way. It was just built into their way of life and was a natural thing. We would report on that so far as we could.

Q: Were there Islamic madrassas that the Saudis had been promoting around or not?

WEINLAND: There was certainly Saudi money supporting Islamic activities in Nigeria. I believe the major mosque in the new capital, Abuja, was built with a lot of Saudi money.

But so far as any centers of radical preaching or education were concerned, I don't think at that time that was a major influence. But the followers of the Maitatsine, so far as they continued to have a presence in Nigeria, had the potential to make trouble; I think the Nigerian police kept a fairly close eye on them.

Q: Could you call on the various imams, pay calls and talk to them?

WEINLAND: Not too easily. I did call on one of the major ones in Kaduna. I was trying to meet leaders of most of denominations so I met the Catholic archbishop there and in Jos and some other places. I met the Anglican. We had a political/protocol FSN who was himself Muslim, and I asked him to set up a meeting for me with one of the leading imams in Kaduna which he did. We had a quite cordial chat sitting on a mat in a courtyard outside an office building. You can't come right out and say, “Well, hey, are you planning any trouble? What are your sermons all about?” He did not refuse to see me. Somebody of that kind would not for example, shake my hand. You know they were traditional in that sense. I was always very careful in Kaduna and in the north to be quite modestly dressed with my hemline was well down my calves and my shoulders and upper arms were always covered.

Q: Where were our other consular posts in Nigeria?

WEINLAND: We were the only one by then. At the time of independence there had been one in each of the three regions so there had been one in Ibadan and one in Enugu. The one in Enugu was closed at the time of the Biafra War and never reopened. The one in Ibadan closed about a year after my familiarization trip in '78, because a new highway put it very close to Lagos in driving time.

Q: That was the Yoruba one, wasn't it?

WEINLAND: It would be more accurate to say it was the one in the Western Region.

Q: Did you find yourself sort of the Hausa representative at the country team meeting or not or did that play any role?

WEINLAND: Well, I hesitate to confess this on tape but I don't think I went to the embassy more than two or three times. I never went down purely for country team meetings. I went to them if they were being held while I was there. It was a ten-hour plus drive and it was maybe an hour or hour and a half by air. The airlines had been denationalized and they were scary as hell, I have to say. I was not all that eager to entrust my being to either the roads or the air. Fairly often people from the embassy came to me, particularly the first year I was there, as the DCM was a personal friend.

Q: Who was that?

WEINLAND: That was George Trail. He had been the consul in Kaduna so he had a lot of friends still in town. He and his wife often came up and stayed with me so we would chat at that point about anything that was going on. Obviously, George also had a good feel for what was going on in the north, so the country team hardly needed me to interpret the northern events. After George left post, and other changes in personnel occurred, I would say the embassy lacked people who understood how different things were in the north. I kept pleading with a couple of key people to come to the north for a genuine familiarization visit, but they never did. Our reporting was occasionally at odds because of that; I certainly had a better understanding for the southern areas, thanks to my posting in Lagos, than they had about the north.

When George Trail was replaced, he was replaced by a person I would rather not name but whom I regarded as not a person who really had his fingers on the pulse. He was an admin officer by background, and therefore trusted his political officer, who was also not a particularly savvy guy in my book. I would get these messages saying, “You should really come down,” and I would say, “Yes, when I have time” or whatever and I didn't go. We kept saying to the political officer, “you should come up here and see this for yourself”

because his major and nearly only contact was his Ibo girlfriend and her family and friends. By the time I left, in my view, a great deal of the reporting from the embassy was not very accurate about what was going on. I'm sure some of that opinion is colored by the traditional embassy-consulate rivalry, but it was more serious than it should have been.

There was a huge political blowup in the middle of the time I was there. The Yoruba became extremely angry, so there was a lot of unrest in the south in the Yoruba area.

Nothing was going on in the north, and yet the embassy imposed on the entire country a regime of voluntary departure and drawdown of embassy staff. We said, “Ain't no problem up here. We can just truck along. Why do we have to send all the spouses and children out?” But we did not win that battle.

Q: So what was happening down there?

WEINLAND: You mean the political stuff?

Q: Yes.

WEINLAND: We had the gubernatorial elections, and the next step was the national elections. They first elected the national assembly and that went off without much problem. That would have been in the winter of 1991 to '92.

Then the next thing was the presidential election. There were the two parties. The system for nominating, again this lovely chain of command, army-dominated kind of system, was to have meetings at the local government authority level that would send a certain number of representatives to the state level and on up. Being as intelligent as Nigerians are, a number of potential candidates began to realize that if they spread enough money around in the initial stages, they could manipulate who rose to the top. So not only were candidates trying to put themselves at the top of the ballot, but there was also a certain amount of manipulation to get a weaker candidate nominated on the other side. It was, I

would say, a fifty percent corrupt process that took place as the nominating conventions moved through this whole process.

The election was scheduled for mid-June by which time we had two candidates. We had a man named M.K.O. Abiola who was Moslem Yoruba from the south, a big wealthy businessman, running from the left-of-center party and then we had Bashir Tofa from the north, a wealthy Moslem Hausa, running from the right-of-center party. Nobody had ever even heard of him, certainly not in the political context. I mean all the other potential candidates had been knocked out in the manipulation at the lower level.

But Babangida, who was still president, was a past master at manipulation and being all things to all men. Both candidates actually thought that he supported them. Babangida was a Muslim, and although his name is actually Hausa, he came from the middle belt area. He was not from the far north so he was kind of in between and he was an army man and the army was relatively de-regionalized and de-tribalized.

As we came down the stretch toward the election, one of the Ibo people who felt it was the Ibos' turn to have one of the big national jobs brought a lawsuit to contest the nomination process in which he had lost out. The lawsuit was going through the court system at the very time that the campaigning and everything was going on. There was a decision announced very close to the election, then an appeal that went to the Supreme Court, and the decision by the Supreme Court was announced two or three days before the election. The election was scheduled for Saturday, and I think the decision was on Wednesday or Thursday.

The day after the decision was announced I had a telephone call from the embassy and they said, “We need your clearance on a press statement.” It was from the new political counselor — the deputy chief of mission was still George Trail as I recall. The political counselor and the public affairs officer, who was close to departure and had been in the country quite a while, called and said, “We need to have your clearance on a statement

the embassy wants to issue about this Supreme Court decision.” The decision was going to throw a major wrench in the election if enforced. The statement read something like, “The U.S. government finds it” and then some word like unacceptable or completely unfortunate, you know a very strong reaction to this whole thing. I listened to it and I thought, “That's not very good.” I asked the two of them, “Has the ambassador seen that?” It would have still been Swing and they answered “Oh, yes.” Well, there I am, the consul general, and the ambassador has cleared this thing, and I thought, “Well, who am I to tell the ambassador he shouldn't clear this thing. If that's how he wants to play this, then that's how he is going to play it.” So I said, “Well, I think it is strong.”

So they issued it and all hell broke loose. The PAO read it to the press. I mean, he called up the press to read it; it wasn't like somebody coming in and saying, “What does the U.S. government think about this?” So it was Friday and we were all, all of us all across the country, supposed to go out to certain places and observe the elections and see what was going on. A big delegation had come in from the European community to do the same. There were a lot of election observers around. So one of the officers at the consulate was going to go out to Jos and observe there, and the political officer was going to go around Kaduna, and I said, “Well, I will go to Kano,” and so I went to Kano. I checked into my hotel and Friday night the phone rang about 10 o'clock at night. It was the embassy, and they say to me, “The American embassy has been forbidden to do any election observance. Don't go to any of the polls and they are declaring persona non grata the PAO.” So he was given 48 hours to get out of the country.

I said, “Ah, well, that's interesting”. The ambassador indeed had not seen the statement that was issued. I sat in the hotel all day until we were allowed to move around town and then I went over to some friends' house for dinner. The woman who was in Jos went ahead and observed because there wasn't any way to get hold of her.

The election took place on a Saturday. They began to count the votes. About two days later, it was clear that Abiola, the Yoruba guy from the south, was going to win and they

stopped the counting and declared the election invalid. It was announced that Babangida would stay in power for the time being and they would figure out what to do. That's when the Yoruba in the south began to demonstrate and riot, because Abiola was Yoruba and was from Abeokuta, which is quite close to Lagos. The Yoruba felt they had been cheated of a chance to have their man in the top job, a particularly bitter pill because they believed something similar had happened before in 1983. So we Americans had to go into voluntary departure, given the threat of violence in the south.

It was a nasty time. There was an interval when Babangida stayed in power. Through the summer he was trying to manipulate the already existing national assembly, which had been elected previous to the presidential election, to vote him an extension of his powers. He said he would leave the army but would remain president of the country and he would stay in power. Some of the stories I got about the amount of money that was sloshing around in the halls of the parliament and in the hotels where they were all living, in Abuja by this time — I mean there were trunk loads of cash that were passing back and forth.

It didn't work; the assembly voted him down and said that he would have to leave as scheduled.

They put together an interim, caretaker government, headed by a Yoruba businessman named Ernest Shonekan with a largely civilian, technocrat cabinet. That was the government that was in power when the new ambassador came. Bill Swing left shortly after the aborted election.

The new ambassador arrived, maybe in September. He came up to Kaduna not too long after he arrived for familiarization visits and courtesy calls. So we took him around Kaduna to meet as many people as we could find who were willing to meet with us. There was sort of this weird limbo feeling just then. Then we went to Kano. I had arranged a dinner with a number of commercial and industrial leaders from Kano in a Chinese restaurant there; there were maybe eight or ten of us at dinner. We came out of the restaurant and got in

the car. I was sitting in the shotgun seat because the ambassador and I can't remember who had come up from Lagos with him were in the back. I had a driver, Adamu, who was one of the most even-tempered, lovely men you can imagine. We were stopped by a soldier on the street and Adamu seemed to be very agitated. I said to him, “What's wrong? What's going on?” He said, “I just heard on the radio that Abacha,” who was the chief of staff of the defense forces “has created a coup and so we no longer have Mr. Shonekan as the president”. But Abacha who was a most malignant character had taken over. That was the end of civilian government for the time being.

It was interesting when my driver said that. I was sitting in the front. We had had some inkling that this might happen; it wasn't totally out of the blue. From the back seat I heard, “Oh, shit.” So that was the first comment of the United States on the events of that evening.

Q: Had Ambassador Swing, did you ever find out his role or reaction to this statement put out just before the election? It certainly didn't help matters.

WEINLAND: Well, he was furious inside the embassy, you know.

Q: He'd been lied to.

WEINLAND: Yes. He hadn't been lied to, just not referred to when the statement was ready or about the process of putting it out.

Q: You had been lied to.

WEINLAND: I had been lied to. I told him that. I said I would not have cleared it had I not been told that he had cleared it. He said, “Well, I never saw it in that form.” He'd seen an earlier form, but not that final form that went out.

Yes, he was furious. I don't know that any heads rolled but I also don't know what various efficiency reports said later on.

Swing is an incredibly nice man, unlike a couple of other ambassadors I worked under. I worked for guys who were real princes and I worked for guys who were utterly the other way. He was a very decent person and I don't believe that he is the sort of person who would have taken a personal vendetta against anyone.

Q: Well, but of course this is professionally . . . This isn't a vendetta thing. This is extremely bad professional conduct.

WEINLAND: The PAO went on to London so he certainly didn't suffer.

Q: After the coup, how long were you there?

WEINLAND: That would have been in about October of '93 and I left in March of '94. So I had about six more months.

Q: Had this move to Abuja been in the works?

WEINLAND: Oh, yes, it was in the works. That was one of the things that was going on the whole time I was there. We were negotiating for property, plans were drawn up for housing in the embassy, and there was a lot of difficult and occasionally bad decision making. It was just a morass, and then the security people would come and look over whatever we were planning to lease as an embassy building until we could build one and that wasn't right; all that was just a constant drum beat.

Q: Did you realize you were sort of under the sword?

WEINLAND: Yes. It was clear that we would close the consulate general in Kaduna when that move happened, since the two towns were quite close. We were under considerable pressure from the Nigerian government to get our embassy up there, and the other

embassies were too. And just as we had had in Berlin, I had a whole stable of mostly wonderful FSNs. They were terribly worried that all the people from Lagos were going to grab all the jobs. In fact, as it worked out, a considerable number, I would say a large majority, of FSNS in Lagos were in no hurry whatsoever to move to the north, where from their point of view, there would be dragons. So most of the FSNs in Kaduna who wanted to were able to bid successfully on the new jobs in Abuja. Some of them were put off by the high cost and tight market for housing in Abuja, and others by lack of schooling for their kids and other considerations.

Of course, there was still going to be a considerable consulate general in Lagos which there is until this day. All the visa functions were kept in Lagos until I think, last year. The commercial section stayed in Lagos and stays there till this day so there were still going to be plenty of FSN jobs in Lagos.

Q: So how did it work for you?

WEINLAND: I should have had a three year assignment that would have ended in August of '94. We had a Foreign Service inspection that came out, probably in the spring of '93, and they were tasked, as all inspection teams are, with reducing the number of positions. They came to Kaduna. I had a secretary; my greatest failure in the Foreign Service was not being able to find a management style that worked with her. She was often reduced to tears, you could never quite find out why or if there was anything you could do to soothe her. I mean, I am not a shouter so it wasn't that I was shouting. I was just completely baffled by this woman, and I think we baffled each other.

As I understand it, when the inspectors said to her, “Tell us what you do,” her answer was, “Pretty much, nothing,” which of course, was extremely helpful in protecting that position. We were in a situation where our communicator was leaving post as was the secretary and we had a married couple who were paneled to come in, one as the secretary, one as the communicator. Because of the voluntary departure and everything, their arrival

was delayed. Then they abolished the secretarial position and we had to do with a TDY communicator because they couldn't assign anybody.

Every time I was given a chance to contest this decision, I said, “You cannot have a post in a country like this, in a place like this, without having an American secretary” and they said, “Well, you can hire somebody locally form the local population.” I said, “There is no local population of American citizens.” The missionary wives were not allowed to work at the embassy. There was one person, the wife of the Peace Corps director; she came for a couple of months. She was absolutely hopeless. She couldn't do anything and she just wanted to sit around and talk all day, which then distracted the political officer or whomever else she was talking to. She went home on leave and didn't come back to work. So I was the person who, when there was a call from the front desk that someone was there to see me, had to go out to bring the person back to my office. The optics of it were pretty bad, and it was also cumbersome. My 20 year anniversary in the Foreign Service was coming due in March. I started thinking of my house in Maine, which I had already bought, and I thought of the garden I wanted to put in, and I simply said, “I think I will retire at the end of March. There really isn't much more to accomplish here except closing the place down and that's really an admin function and not anything that particularly requires me to be here.” So I flew out on the 29th of March, 1994.

Q: Briefly, what have you been doing since?

WEINLAND: Well, I first moved to Maine and I decided I would never leave.

Q: Where in Maine?

WEINLAND: I lived in a very small town called Penobscot, on the Blue Hill Peninsula, about five hours beyond Boston, northeast or down east. It was sort of like being in the Foreign Service all over again because there was a local population that was an interesting cultural phenomenon that you had to figure out. For a short time, I took a job

at the local newspaper, going to all the selectman meetings and school board meetings. I was doing political officer reporting on Penobscot, Maine.

But then one winter, while I was shoveling the 25th snowstorm of the season, I said to myself, “There has to be more to life than this” so gradually relocated to Boston, deciding that I was probably in the end an urban girl and not a farmer girl. I am not at all sorry I spent those years in Maine. It's a beautiful place with nice people.

In Boston I've gotten involved in a couple of volunteer activities; one of them is recording for the blind and dyslexic. I worked for while with the International Institute of Boston interviewing asylum seekers with the goal of getting them pro bono lawyers and also helping people apply for green cards but that job ended. I now am also a volunteer in a program to support prisoners who are earning bachelor degrees from Boston University, which has a prison education program.

Q: Do you have any thoughts that you would like to convey about the Foreign Service?

WEINLAND: I think the Foreign Service I joined and served in no longer exists, an opinion I form from talking to friends who are still in it. I realize that it is a very different place. Somebody a couple of years ago said to me that the war in Iraq has sucked the energy out of the Department of State. Perhaps with the new dispensation that will change somewhat. I think the Bush years were very unfortunate.

I felt that the Foreign Service in which I served was a very professional service. I think that some of the things we did, which we could do because we had the budget, other countries didn't do, such as language training, area training, a lot of the excursion tours at some of the military colleges and things, the congressional internships, I think we had a very good sense of how our government worked. I think we were by and large, very effective, a very effective group of people protecting and extending American interests abroad. The people I knew all worked hard, most of them enjoyed the place they were stationed; even

a place like Lagos that is supposed to be such a hell hole. You figure out where your zone of safety and security is and you just turn out to have a lot of fun there.

When I retired, I wrote a book called Living Abroad With Uncle Sam; Foreign Service Days that came out about ten years after I left the Foreign Service. I wrote it partly because people kept asking me, “What was your favorite post overseas?” and I got kind of tired of answering that question and so I thought I would write the book and answer it that way.

I really feel the one place I didn't enjoy living in and where the work wasn't very interesting either was Zurich, my first overseas post. All the others had their difficulties — I mean it was difficult to live under the Communists, it was difficult to live in a military regime — but they were immensely enjoyable places. By and large, although there was the odd screamer, all the people I worked for and with were people whom I respected and enjoyed and liked having social relationships with. Many, of course, have remained good friends. To me the Foreign Service was a very fine place to work, and it involved hard, interesting work.

Q: Good. Thank you, Helen.

End of interview